

**IMPROVE YOUR  
CHESS KNOW**

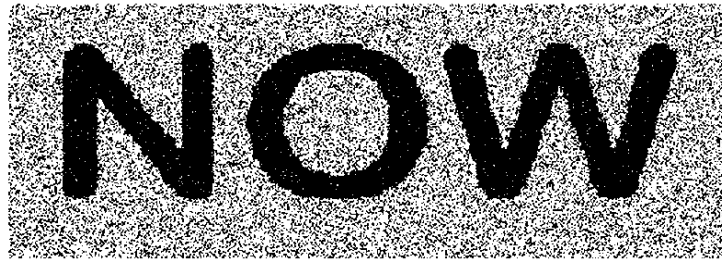


Jonathan Tisdall

**EVERYMAN CHESS**



# IMPROVE YOUR CHESS



**NOW**

**Jonathan Tisdall**

**EVERYMAN CHESS**

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*To my father, who got me started.*

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# Symbols

|              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| +            | Check                    |
| ++           | Double check             |
| #            | Checkmate                |
| !!           | Brilliant move           |
| !            | Good move                |
| !?           | Interesting move         |
| ?!           | Dubious move             |
| ?            | Bad move                 |
| ??           | Blunder                  |
| +-           | White is winning         |
| ±            | White is much better     |
| ±            | White is slightly better |
| =            | Equal position           |
| ∓            | Black is slightly better |
| ∓            | Black is much better     |
| -+           | Black is winning         |
| Ch           | Championship             |
| corr.        | Correspondence game      |
| Z            | Zonal event              |
| IZ           | Interzonal event         |
| Ct           | Candidates event         |
| Wch          | World Championship       |
| OL           | Olympiad                 |
| ( <i>n</i> ) | <i>n</i> th match game   |
| ( <i>D</i> ) | Diagram follows          |

# Introduction

*“Seeing much, suffering much, and studying much, are the three pillars of learning.” – Benjamin Disraeli*

## Who am I, and what is this book about?

I can clearly remember the first time I read the fairly clichéd description of someone as a player ‘with a promising future behind him’. I appreciated the witticism so much that it may have subconsciously influenced what looked like a bright chess career. In any event, the shoe soon fit.

Moving on to (part of) another well-worn expression – ‘Those who cannot do, teach’ – we can find part of the justification behind this book. When a player insists on trying to make his way in the chess world despite obstacles and handicaps, teaching is often the haven he seeks.

Studying the games and careers of great players offers obvious advantages, but in many ways their trials are far removed from the sufferings of other mortals. A diary of upwardly spiralling success punctuated by declarations that ‘Grandmaster X<sup>1</sup> is now out to get me’ can make fascinating reading. On the other hand, the more mundane scenario of erratic results, blown wins and painful setbacks contains, I think, more fertile ground for cultivating material suited for improving one’s game.

This book is a manual for players facing problems in the development of their skills, i.e., most people. I will try to explain what goes on when experienced players are thinking, or what should go on. There is a lot of psychology and philosophy here. Although such serious words are not considered ideal when finding a title for a book, I hope that they will in fact make this book instructive in a less conventional way.

In the course of a long and sporadically encouraging career, I have given a lot of thought to various methods of improvement. This book is a selection of various ideas, both my own and those of others.

Some classic advice must be repeated, but I have tried to expand on this when possible. I have tried to list all conscious influences. During the closing stages of writing I have begun to understand how many subconscious influences there are. To deal with this, you will find an appendix that combines the tasks of a bibliography and a review list.

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1 Or ‘Champion K’?

This book breaks some with recent tradition, and tries to supply references and documentation when possible. Some of the quotations have proved elusive. This is partly due to the growing trend of incomplete information in all aspects of study. Rather than be overly scholarly, I have retained some quotes that are not fully referenced, simply because I couldn't resist them.

### **Is this book what you need?**

I doubt that most readers will find every part of this book useful. On the other hand, I consider it likely that there will be material here that suits the reader perfectly, or fires the imagination. The practical sections of the book have worked successfully in training programs with players of various levels. The more abstract sections will, I hope, stimulate the kind of thinking that may spark improvement, or point to an area of study that will be of benefit.

Whenever I write or annotate, I do *try* to accommodate as wide an audience as possible. One's embrace can never be as wide as desired and I know that I tend to aim a little 'high'. This leads me to believe that I should suggest that the prospective reader of this book have a reasonable amount of playing experience.

Having said that, much of the material in this book has already been presented in some form to a wide range of players, from 'ordinary' club standard to promising youngsters, with encouraging results.

At the lower levels a lot of the material may seem to go to waste, but many of the techniques are designed as self-training programs that one can implement at any pace. My experience is that the ideas here can help you help yourself. What may not be useful at once may come in handy later. And if just one of the training ideas proves helpful, I think you will reap clear benefits from this volume.

In the course of writing this book, I had hoped that working through my own barriers would provide material here. In retrospect, having finally achieved the grandmaster title during this time, I can only say that I am now even more convinced that each player must find his own unique solution to the problem of improving – there are so many things that can be done! If at times this book seems to wander, it is due to precisely this. Hopefully this will also ensure a sufficiency of ideas to explore. If nothing else, this book should be a great time-saver for those wondering about how to improve – a kind of training travelogue.

### **Starting fresh**

One experiment I undertook in the course of this book was trying to recapture the awe and befuddlement that grips a newcomer to the game. I did this by renewing my acquaintance with shogi, the Japanese form of chess. This certainly served its purpose. That game continues to baffle me completely, and helped give me back

a sense of the beginner's mind. Some aspects of how shogi is taught, and a few tactical patterns have made their way here. It was a thought-provoking jaunt, and some useful observations resulted.

### **How to read this book**

Every detail of a major project tends to torment me. While writing this book, the problem of ordering the chapters was a recurring headache. This is how I see the material:

The critical chapters are those based on the 'Fabled Tree of Analysis' (Chapter 1), and the technique of 'stepping-stone diagrams' (Chapter 2). These ideas recur so often in other chapters that they had to come first.

Apart from this, I think the book can be read in any order, and is designed to be browsable, despite the occasional gravity attached to a teaching curriculum. I like the free-form chapter called Wisdom and Advice, which is a kind of micro-book. Basically, I wanted to present material in the form I find most appealing when studying. Using quotations to focus and separate material, and being able to dip in and out as desired lighten the task of learning, at least for me.

### **How did this book come about?<sup>1</sup>**

To be honest, this book as it exists now probably resulted from one of the offhand conversations I had with Anatoly Lein years ago. Occasionally these simple chats would take an unexpectedly serious turn. Suddenly Grandmaster Lein would erupt with a heartfelt question aimed in my direction. I don't know if he meant these questions to be largely rhetorical. Many of them have lingered with me over the years.

This book begins with one. A veritable koan, that I have never been able to forget. I have another one (question and perhaps, book) nagging away at me, planted in the same way. Maybe someday I will have to try to answer that one too. In the meantime, I have to thank Anatoly Lein for giving me so much food for thought in such compressed form. A tip of the hat also to my various students, who have endured a great deal of the material in this book, and helped me to hone my conclusions.

I would like to thank the members of the shogi list, an e-mail group on the Internet, particularly Jeff Mallett, who took the time to contribute thoughts and comparisons about the games and their respective teaching traditions.

I would also like to thank Jeff LaHue for some enlightening source material on Alfred Binet and other research into blindfold chess. I am grateful to Andrew

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<sup>1</sup> The short answer: it took a long time to write, and a lot of people helped.

Kinsman for commissioning this book, and for encouraging it, despite the fact that writing it outlasted his stint as editor. Finally, Murray Chandler's threats were necessary (and appreciated) to get me to stop writing and fussing.

I am a little apologetic that some of my Norwegian friends and colleagues have quite a few losses included here. The material is influenced by my surroundings, and these games just happen to lie closer to my consciousness.

In its first incarnation, this book was to be an updating of Renaud and Kahn's *The Art of Checkmate*, a relatively forgotten work which does a marvellous job of teaching mating attacks through pattern training. Now, this topic lies in an appendix.

While basic attacking and pattern training are valuable subjects, they have been well covered in other works. This topic remains a part of this book, but has been merged with more ambitious training ideas. Much of what was a sterling textbook in my youth is common knowledge now. And that is not just because my youth was frighteningly long ago. The general level of skill and literacy in chess has risen enormously in this age of information.

So, I began to feel a more ambitious work beckoning, one with a more philosophical and psychological angle. This is it, and I hope it helps.

*Jonathan Tisdall*  
Oslo 1994-7

# 1 The Fabled Tree of Analysis

*"I don't think like a tree – do you think like a tree?"* – Grandmaster Anatoly Lein

Kotov's book *Think Like a Grandmaster* is a tremendous compendium of practical advice and thought-provoking discussions. The most famous of these is the so-called 'Tree of Analysis', which has been widely adopted as the ideal method for perfecting the vital art of calculating variations. Grandmaster Lein's gruff question haunted me for years, and still does. Lein's amusing turn of phrase makes it impossible to ignore, and the more I thought about it, the more I had to. The answer is simple – of course not. On the other hand, I had been taught to. Think like a tree. I didn't think I thought like one. But should I? Given the status of Kotov's teaching, one feels that one should – but why does Lein's complaint ring so true?

Kotov's advice contains much wisdom, none better than the importance of selecting candidate moves. However, the classic examples chosen by Kotov are a bit like the cooking programme cliché: "Here is one I prepared earlier". Not only does Kotov fail to discuss important practical considerations (like when to move and when to calculate), he ignores distracting subvariations that could trouble the player in a game situation. Not only can I not see the wit of drawing trees, but an honest tree is always a bewildering thicket and, worryingly,

the better you analyse, the more inextricable it becomes. Yes, there is good advice here, and application of the technique will help develop a vital skill – organized and objective analysis.

But consider – why do we not analyse 'like trees'? It is worth reflecting on the possible advantages of darting back and forth, and considering the impact of judgement and intuition when analysing. Kotov's technique is best suited to soluble tactical positions and can be an aid in many situations. It is an excellent training method, for dissecting positions in far greater detail than possible in practical play. But for efficiency *at the board*...

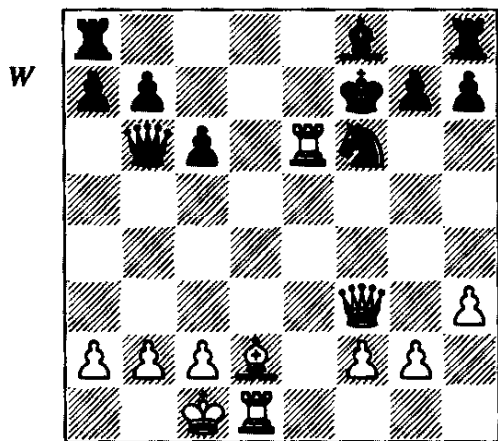
After much thought, I would propose a somewhat different application of techniques, which I believe are both more natural and more efficient. This is not to say that there isn't a vast amount of helpful information in *Think Like a Grandmaster*, but I think this will become clear as we proceed. Let's begin at the beginning, with Kotov's ground-breaking work.

## The sales pitch

*" 'My goodness! Already 30 minutes gone on thinking whether to move the rook or the knight.' ... And then suddenly you are struck by the happy idea*

– why move rook or knight? ‘What about ♖b1?’ And without any more ado, without any analysis at all, you move the bishop” – Kotov, *Think Like a Grandmaster*

Kotov relates that this rendition of an all-too-familiar, muddled process of thought received an ovation from his audience. It is a nice bit of patter, and this has made it easier to swallow the proposed remedy whole. There can be no argument that this kind of random bumbling is common and must be weeded out. I propose that we follow Kotov’s argumentation closely, and consider how compelling his ideas are. We must be prepared to accept some stern measures to improve slovenly thinking, but we should also be ready to protest if we sense something isn’t quite right.



**I. Boleslavsky – S. Flohr**  
(variation)  
*USSR Ch (Moscow) 1950*

Here is one of the key examples in the ‘Tree of Analysis’ section of Kotov’s book. Before going on, it would be well worthwhile to examine the

position deeply, producing a clear record of the variations you calculate.

Kotov’s suggested method is that one consistently draw up a list of candidate moves to be examined at each turn. Analyse as you would in a game, without moving the pieces. He mentions in passing that one must also learn to restrict the number of candidates considered, but does not really provide any enlightenment how best to do this.

I would also strongly suggest that you try to set down your full process of thought as closely as possible – try to capture the inner monologue of your problem solving. This means not only the more abstract bits of your reasoning (as opposed to concrete variations) but also a running commentary of what goes through your head, your internal conversations. This is an excellent tool for analysing your work later, and of great use to a teacher or trainer – even if this is oneself. In other words, besides recording the variations you find, solve it ‘aloud’. This will also provide an interesting counterpoint to Kotov’s presentation of the solution.

Here is the gist of Kotov’s solution. I have condensed his remarks a bit. Primarily he offered variations.

**1 ♖xf6+! gxf6**

I have a certain draw ... Rook down, must check or find forcing move ... 2 ♕h5+ comes to mind ... Maybe I didn’t need to sacrifice ... Can take a quick look back to make sure that Black was threatening to consolidate ... If 1 ♖de1, Black has many defences:



1...♖b5!? or 1...♜d8!? ... No, I must act quickly.

2 ♖h5+

Otherwise Black can bring his queen over to defend. Now there are four candidate moves ... Start with ...♗e7 and ...♗e6 and leave the others till the end. They are more complicated.

a) 2...♗e7 3 ♜e1+ ♗d6 (3...♗d7 4 ♖f7+ ♗d6 5 ♜f4+ ♗c5 6 ♜e3+; 3...♗d8 4 ♖e8+ ♗c7 5 ♜f4+ ♗d6 6 ♜e7#) 4 ♜f4+ ♗d7 5 ♖f7+ ♜e7 6 ♜d1+ for example 6...♗c8 7 ♖e6#.

b) 2...♗e6 3 ♜e1+ is essentially the same as the first variation calculated.

c) 2...♗g7. Here I have perpetual check ... What else is there? Aha, the bishop check wins out of hand: 3 ♜h6+ ♗g8 4 ♖g4+ ♗f7 5 ♜d7+ ♜e7 6 ♖g7+.

d) 2...♗g8 3 ♖g4+ and now:

d1) 3...♗f7!. Still have a draw, but 4 ♖c4+ is strong:

d11) 4...♗g6 5 ♖e4+! (5 ♜e3 ♖b4) 5...♗f7 (5...f5 6 ♖e6+) 6 ♜a5!:

d111) 6...♜h6+ 7 ♗b1 ♜ad8 (or 7...♜hd8 8 ♖xh7+ ♜g7 9 ♖h5+) 8 ♖c4+! ♗g7 9 ♖g4+ and again the d1-rook is protected so the queen on b6 falls.

d112) 6...♖c5 7 ♜d7+ ♜e7 8 ♜b4 ♖g5+ 9 f4.

d12) 4...♗e8 5 ♜e1+! ♜e7 (5...♗d8 6 ♖d3+ ♗c7 7 ♜f4+) 6 ♜b4 ♖c7 7 ♖c5.

d13) 4...♗g7. Now White has no useful checks, but he can attack the queen, which is nearly as good: 5 ♜e3! ♖c7 (5...♖b4 6 ♜d7+ ♗g6 7 ♖f7+

♗f5 8 g4+ ♗e4 9 ♖xf6! ♖e1+ 10 ♜d1) 6 ♖g4+ ♗f7 7 ♜d7+.

d2) 3...♜g7. Now 4 ♜h6 ♖c7 5 ♜d7? wins. No, stop! 5...♖xd7! 6 ♖xd7 ♜xh6+ and I'm the one to resign. 4 ♖c4+ ♗f8 5 ♜b4+ or 4 ♖e6+ ♗f8 5 ♜f4 ♜d8 6 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8 7 ♜d6+ and White wins.

Kotov continues by asking what Boleslavsky does then – sacrifice or check the variations one more time?

Now I would like to ask a question. How well did you do? Does your tree look like Kotov's? I would guess not. Perhaps even less so if you strictly followed his advice. My experience working with this position is that, even with players of quite a high standard, the proposed solution does not come about so neatly. The first and most common stumbling block comes as early as move two, especially to those trying to apply Kotov's rules. Here there is a very natural branching point, with many getting bogged down trying to work out two natural white options, 2 ♜g5 and 2 ♜c3, each of which activate two of White's pieces while creating a threat. Given the constraints of time, even more so if this were a real game situation, it is clear that one can go easily astray.

One of the things which I like very much about Kotov's presentation here is the use of the internal monologue. However, I can't help feeling that in his case it is done largely for effect. This technique can be extremely valuable if used to organize information.

I would suggest a more human approach to this problem position. Kotov explicitly states that his idea is to teach people how to calculate like machines. This has its advantages of course – machines don't make tactical oversights, and any improvement in this direction for humanoids is positive. However, *playing* like a machine is equally clearly not what we were born to do. My theory contends that a combination of the natural human approach to the position, tempered with some of the discipline advocated by Kotov, is more effective. The components of this technique are (in this order):

1) To aim towards the choice of a single critical variation (heresy!). Branches are dealt with when unavoidable, and primarily to navigate the chief variation.

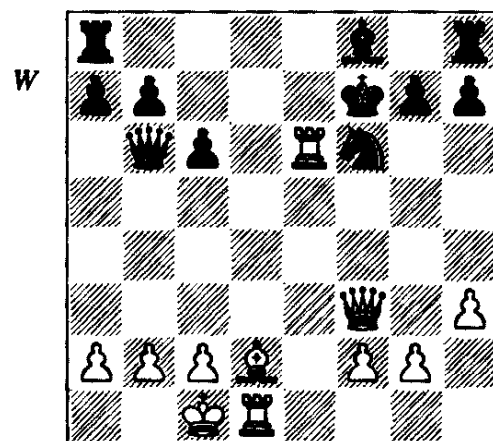
2) The constant application of abstract assessment.

3) A scan for critical candidates.

Of course boiling a position down to one critical variation is rare, and generally characteristic of tactical positions. But the way to search is one line at a time, and with luck, identifying the most critical line first. The tricky part is, as ever, the selection and limitation of candidate moves. Basically, one will try to eliminate branches and shape a main variation. Checking for a wide selection of feasible candidates is primarily reserved for situations where one is checking for errors (verifying not having overlooked a critical line) or when the general trend of the analysis is unsatisfactory and one seeks new possibilities. The key

element here is really number 2 in the above list, which is used to gather and process the results of concrete analysis, and then to use this knowledge to find a sensible range of candidate variations.

Before I start confusing even myself, let's return to the position, and examine how to apply this technique, which I will dub 'variation processing', in practice. I find that a depressingly mechanical techno-term, but hope that the result, at least, will be less robotic.



**I. Boleslavsky – S. Flohr**  
(variation)  
*USSR Ch (Moscow) 1950*

The beginning of the solution is not particularly controversial – we are attacking and so it is natural to examine violent moves. The rook on e6 is attacked. Not only is the wishy-washy option 1 ♖de1 not in keeping with the spirit of the position, it gives Black a breathing space and also forfeits the chance of using the d1-rook to penetrate into the black position. If Black gets a respite, he can bring his queen

into active defence, perhaps through b5. We should note that allowing the introduction of Black's most powerful piece into the equation *would be a very bad thing indeed*. Although the rapidity of reaching these conclusions is influenced in part by a player's experience, which makes up that mystical ingredient 'intuition', one can deduce this from the above kind of abstract reasoning.

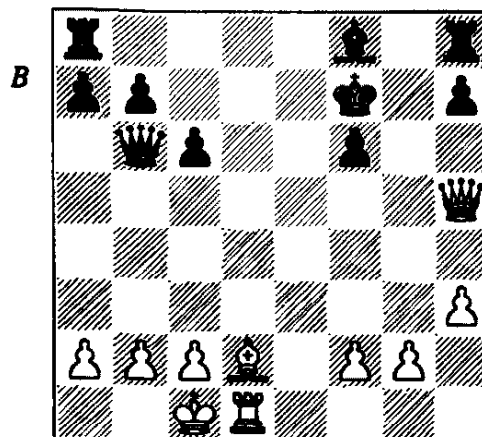
**1 ♖xf6+! gxf6**

As noted before, there is a natural branch now. When calculating tactical variations, there is a natural tendency to stop and select candidates whenever the process stalls. This is self-evident – when we stop, we look around – but it also shows that the constant, enforced stopping to search for candidates is unnatural. *Our reflex is to go forward and work out one complete variation*. One can be unlucky here and choose one of the murkier alternatives. I would recommend pursuing...

**2 ♕h5+ (D)**

...on the grounds that it is the most direct – checks always are. Your opponent can't hit you when he's always moving his king. If you picked another move, bad luck (it happens). Hopefully you either made it work (as convincingly as the main line will work) or switched to another option when you got bogged down.

Now there is a very serious branching problem. There are four king moves. Kotov recommends leaving the most difficult to last. How do I know which will be the most difficult? I must gather information, and this

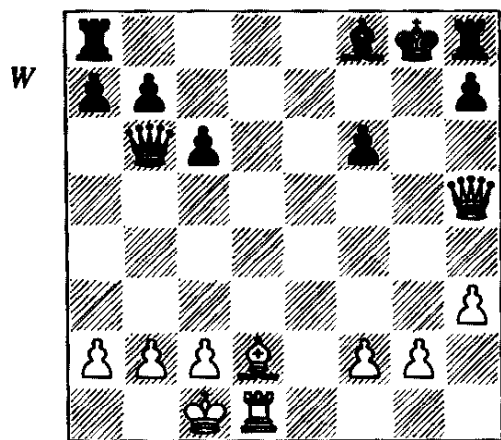


either means plunging in or sorting them out. Is it possible to sort them out before analysing? I think so, and this is again done by having a quick philosophical chat with myself. A quick scan of the alternatives can eliminate three with very little actual calculation. With experience this process is virtually subconscious, but what happens, I believe, is this: I say to myself "2...♔g7 looks absurd, inviting the bishop to join the attack with tempo" (previously I have registered in my mind the inclusion of the bishop automatically unveils and readies the rook for action; if not, I do now). This provokes a brief calculation to support this strategic verdict: 2...♔g7 3 ♖h6+ ♔g8 4 ♕g4+ ♔f7 5 ♖d7+ ♔e7 6 ♕g7+. These moves all leap to mind. The rook check has been anticipated by the earlier process of thought, and the final check is the natural use of our free third move. One down.

Black's king wandering into the e-file should trigger similar scepticism as we try to narrow the field. Surely it is foolish to invite the rook into the attack? Here one can finish the job even without formal calculation. After

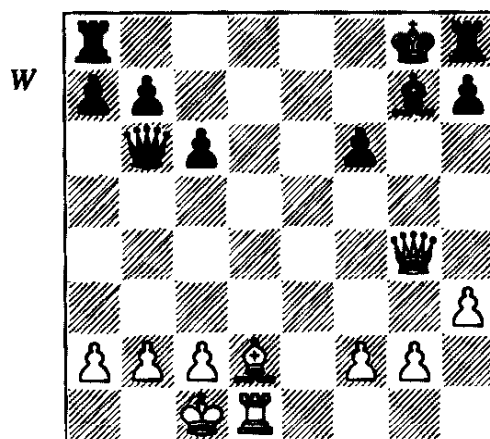
(2...♔ to the e-file) 3 ♖e1+ all replies have deadly consequences. Retreating to the first rank allows a check on e8, the second allows a check on f7 and d6 allows a check on f4. Each of these lead to the others. All the white pieces are converging on the black king with check. After noting that by emerging on c5 at some point Black would lose his queen to ♕e3+ (and he would be *happy* if that were the end of his troubles) one need hardly produce a concrete variation to eliminate two more alternatives. White's pieces arrive on e8/f7/f4 in the order required by the position of Black's exposed king. We can move on to the fourth and final alternative after either examining a simple variation, or by assessing the duel of ♖+♗+♕ vs ♔ to be foreordained. Note that here an abstract approach to the position is far more efficient than sitting down and meticulously travelling the branches to the end.

I don't think that this has taken too much time. Now we move on to ... 2...♔g8 (D)



Now 3 ♖g4+ follows naturally here on the most forcing move principle.

Now there are only two options: 3...♔f7! when we note that we have both at least a draw and an attack – a comforting thought a rook down – and 3...♕g7 (D), which demands to be analysed.



One move that springs to mind is 4 ♕h6. And here I would like to stress very much Kotov's remarks. This is the one instance where he gives a realistic version of an internal monologue. He gives: "4...♖c7 5 ♗d7? wins. No!! stop: 5...♖xd7! 6 ♖xd7 ♕xh6+" (even this is not so clear in my opinion, but obviously White has strayed from the correct path) before peeling back and finding the refutation of the branch. Did you notice what has happened here?

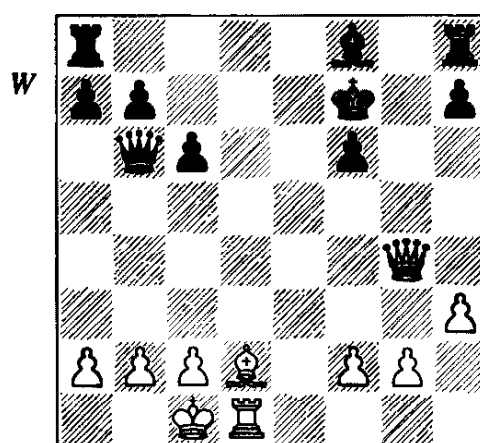
Kotov has plunged into calculation and then retraced his steps. After 3...♕g7 there are in fact three key candidate moves, two of which win. He did not list them and work through them, which would have made him an odds-on favourite to clarify the branch at once. He blasted down a branch by selecting a move that came to hand. He didn't explicitly mention the

branching, and he went back and re-worked the variation. According to Kotovian principles, we should have instead gone back to our list of fourth-move alternatives, since reanalysing variations is a wasteful sin. One might argue that strict adherence to Kotov's rules would have made the presentation of the position a bit harder to follow. This begs two questions. If it is harder to present in pure candidate and tree form, then how is it managing all of this in one's head with a ticking clock? And if this is wrong, why does it seem more convincing – truer – the way Kotov has presented it?

Whether or not one examined 4 ♖h6 first, a search for a forceful alternative – and according to my method we are working out a most critical branch, and are not about to leave it until we are finished – will find yet another check. Once we spot the a2-g8 diagonal it becomes clear that Black is in dire straits. 4 ♛c4+ ♔f8 5 ♙b4+ and 4 ♛e6+ ♔f8 5 ♙f4 are obviously decisive. (If you considered the flashy 5 ♙b4+ to play ♜d7 afterwards, I hope you reckoned with 5...c5!. Now if 6 ♙xc5+ ♛xc5 7 ♜d7 Black has the transfer 7...♞g5+ and ...♞g6.)

So now we have a definite main line: 1 ♜xf6+ gxf6 2 ♛h5+ ♔g8 3 ♛g4+ ♔f7! (D). Now what? Hunker down, draw up a list and get to the bottom of matters? I don't think so. To answer Kotov's final question out of sequence, I think the efficient GM gets on with it. We already know that we are playing without risk and that the sacrifice on f6 is the most promising

continuation. My vote is that we smash off that knight on f6. Let's get that critical position on the board so that it is easier to calculate. Let's get his clock running. He's the one who has decisions to make on moves two and three of the continuation. Maybe we can have a think about the critical position on his time, while we have clearer view as we near the position.

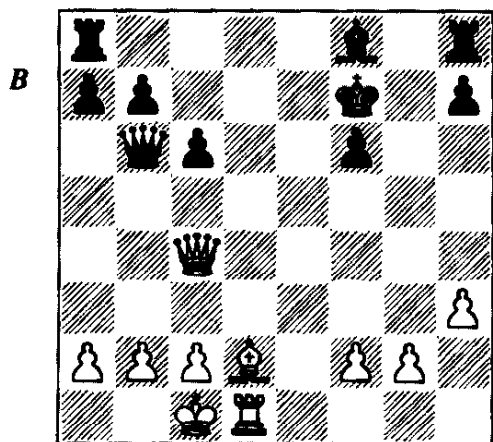


So here we are. We have a draw if we want, but let's try to find more. What has changed? Well, the queen is certainly more flexibly posted on g4. It eyes d7 ... and the diagonal which proved so handy earlier. Again we can pass over 4 ♙e3 for now since after 4...♞b5 we have committed the cardinal sin of helping Black defend.

4 ♛c4+ (D)

It is not immediately obvious what this achieves, but it is clear that we are still not risking anything. On general grounds, it cannot hurt to centralize our strongest piece further. Here we really do need a list: 4...♔g6/♔g7/♔e(8).

Again I am tempted to dismiss the crossing to the e-file, but this must be verified. Now Black has the e8-square,

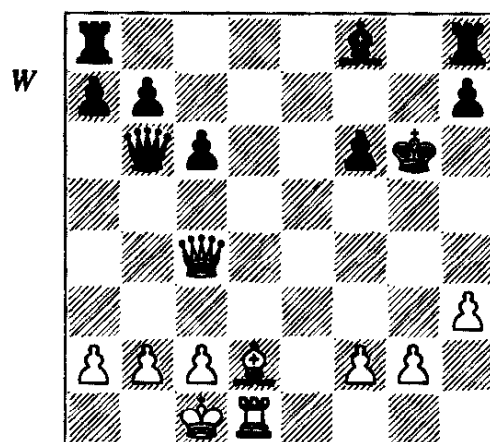


which means the blocking ...♔e7 is an alternative, and White's queen is on a different diagonal. So: 4...♔e8 5 ♔e1+ (checking with the queen on e6 is clearly less efficient – by putting the queen in front on the e-file, less pressure is mounted on e7 because the 'more expensive' piece leads the way) 5...♔e7 (5...♔d8 6 ♔d3+ ♔c7 7 ♔f4+ is familiar mayhem; the mechanism is slightly different, and illustrates the additional power and flexibility of having a centralized queen) 6 ♔b4 is obviously devastating. The retrieval of any of the sacrificed material will leave Black defenceless and after 6...♔c7, 7 ♔c5 is most convincing.

Once again this leaves the retreat to the g-file. I would look at 4...♔g7 first. Why? Because it is the least natural move and the primary candidate for elimination. Why is it less natural? For one reason, it conflicts with the f8-bishop. Though this is fairly irrelevant here (not completely since ...♔h6+ would be desirable in some lines), it is an intuitive factor. The relevant factor is that it leaves the king more vulnerable as now an invasion of the rook to d7, a latent attacking

feature of the position, will come with check. Now the search should be for a way to use this idea. 5 ♔e3! activates two-thirds of the work force with tempo on the black queen, which, as Kotov notes, is nearly as good as a check on the brutality scale. 5...♔c7 (5...♔b4 6 ♔d7+ ♔g6 7 ♔f7+ ♔f5 8 g4+ ♔e4 9 ♔xf6! ♔e1+ 10 ♔d1) 6 ♔g4+ ♔f7 7 ♔d7+ and White will soon have a queen and a fistful of pawns for two rooks, a winning material advantage. Now we can turn our attention to the toughest defence. Again, *one could already bash off the move 4 ♔c4+ on the board* – we still have our perpetual and again it is Black that has the tough decisions to make.

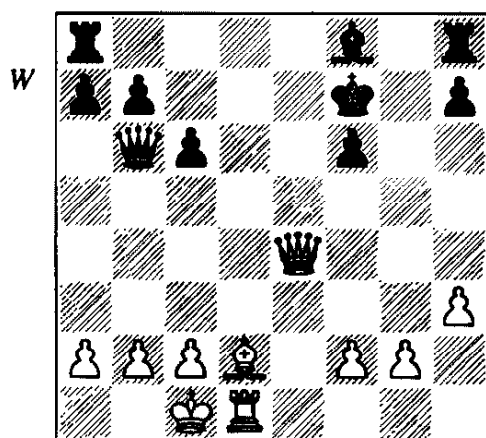
Next we consider 4...♔g6 (D).



Time again for a think. Unfortunately 5 ♔e3 ♔b4 still looks like assisting the enemy. Note how allowing the black queen to step into the fray nearly always neutralizes the white queen. The previous variation has definitely given me an idea of what I would like – to get the black king on the second rank in favourable fashion.

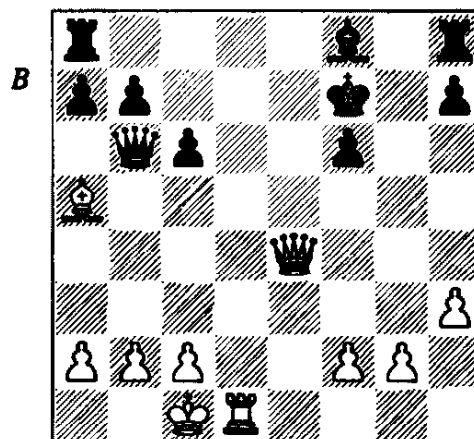
That, and the fact that we can test options with impunity thanks to the perpetual check, suggests **5 ♖e4+!**.

I always say that biggest piece to the middle is always a good move. It influences the e7-square, which could rule out a pesky interposition on that square. My guess is that **5...f5** can only be further exposure ... sure enough, **6 ♖e6+** refutes that convincingly. So **5...♔f7 (D)** is forced.

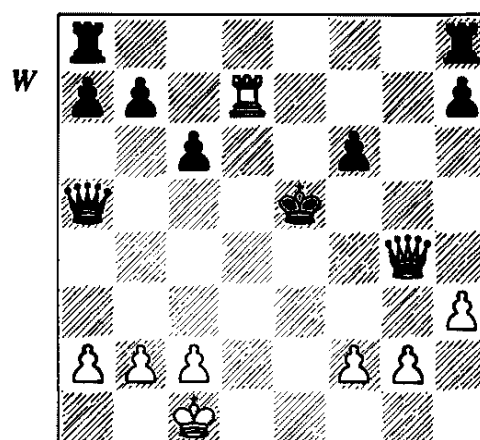


Now hitting the queen is a more interesting idea. **6 ♔e3** forces **6...♖c7** – the check on d7 must be prevented. Now if **7 ♖c4+ ♔g6**, **8 ♖g4+** forces a position from the last variation. Ah, but now **7...♔e8** escapes since danger hardly looms on the e-file. Pity that the themes cannot be knit together in this way. So what do I need? A forceful way to get the rook to d7 without allowing **...♖c7** ... Hold on! **6 ♔a5!! (D)** fits that description.

But now there is a real danger that Black can co-ordinate a defence by inserting a check on h6. Now we must work things out to the end, since if this variation does not win, it could well lose. Maybe I should first check to see



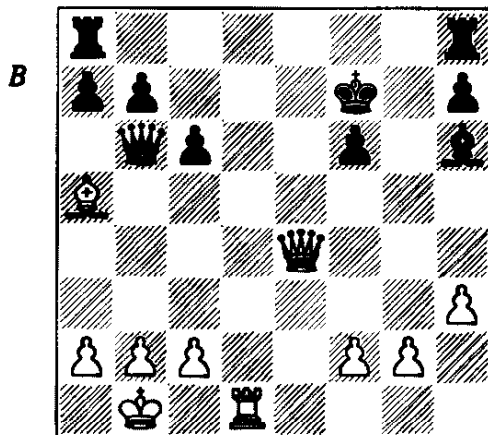
that the check on d7 really does end the game: **6...♖xa5 7 ♔d7+ ♔e7 (7...♔g8 8 ♖e6#) 8 ♖xe7+ (8 ♔xe7+ ♔f8 looks wrong for White – but what about 9 ♖e6 then? ... 9...♖g5+ and ...♖g6) 8...♔g6 9 ♖g7+ ♔f5 (9...♔h5 10 g4+ and ♖h6 mates) 10 ♖g4+ ♔e5 (D).**



Here again I have a draw with **11 ♖e2+**, there should be a way to pick up the queen with a check on the fifth rank, and honestly, mate should also 'turn up'. No worries here. (This assessment is correct, and I leave it to the reader to find the most efficient execution.)

**6...♔h6+ 7 ♔b1 (D)**

And Black is dead, as the rook arrives on d7 ... Black can only counter



the threat of a check on d7 by playing a rook to the d-file ... Hmmm ... there is some trouble on my back rank so I don't have time to win the queen. Unless ... I can parry this mate threat. Can I achieve anything with checks? Yes – I can protect d1, perhaps by checking on c4 then g4... So, which rook goes to d8? 7... ♖hd8 looks unlikely – 8 ♕c4+ now if ♔ to the e-file, 9 ♖e1+ wins and ♔ to the g-file is answered by 9 ♕g4+. So 8... ♕f8 and ... 9 ♖b4+ not only doesn't mate, it forgets to attack the queen. But 7... ♖hd8 allows 8 ♕xh7+ ♖g7 and the only check left – 9 ♕h5+ – is mission accomplished. So: 7... ♖ad8 8 ♕c4+! ♔g7 9 ♕g4+ and again the d1-rook is protected and so the black queen falls. What about 8... ♕f8? Now d8 hangs. The job is nearly over.

OK, a final look to see that all defences have been considered ... 6... ♕c5 gives some extra protection to e7. After 7 ♖d7+ ♖e7 8 ♖b4 ♕g5+ 9 f4. Looks good. A little further just to wrap up loose ends: 9... f5 10 ♕c4+. Done!

In practice, these lines would not even be terribly long, since if we do

the practical thing, moving when there is no risk and forcing Black to make decisions, the final calculations can be done just prior to playing 6 ♖a5 on the board.

Looking back at this version of the solution, it seems to have taken a vast amount of time and space. But the vast majority of the work was verbal, and in real-time, this happens very quickly. The most important aspect of the solution was constantly interpreting the results of each search. One notes the dynamics of the position, recurring themes, key tactical ideas, the ideal posts for the pieces – factors not usually associated with the calculation of variations. Also, you will note that there were more variations covered in the second pass of the position, and they were calculated using shorter variations (since we did not, as Kotov did, try to solve it from the start position).

One question that naturally arises from the examination of this position is the ordering of variations. Would it not be even more efficient to tackle the variations that appear to be most difficult first? Then, if these turn out in our favour, we could go back and tidy up the inferior variations later? There may be occasions when this is true. I have a feeling that this might be an effective method when one is defending a tactical position. In the above example, when one is attacking, and more importantly, sacrificing, I think the method given is best.

One argument is that by examining the potentially weaker defences first,



one can actually get a clearer picture of the hurdles to be surmounted. If great difficulties arise breaking down apparently inferior lines, one has to examine the entire sacrificial enterprise in a colder light. In the meantime, one is gathering vital hints about the motifs in the position that will usually be of great use in wending through the most difficult lines later. The assessment of lines for elimination, or to place them in some sort of hierarchy, is being done through an intuitive or abstract process. This is a far less exact science than calculation. It has value as a sorting tool, but not for passing absolute judgement.

I have also tried to stress the psychological and practical aspects of the example. Besides pointing out that one should not be sitting in the start position working things out to a finish, one exerts great pressure on the opponent by tossing off the moves that need to be played as quickly as possible. This should not be underestimated. Getting bogged down in finicky detail is perhaps the greatest danger with intense calculation.

Finally, even though we have approached this position in a different way from Kotov, one of his questions must be considered. After the final calculation, does the metaphorical grandmaster commit the sin of re-checking his work, or does he confidently play the planned sequence? I think it depends, and not just on the personality of the grandmaster. One

practical consideration is the clock. If you have a reasonable amount of time left, there is no harm in double-checking. Kotov is probably right when he preaches against double-checking in general. It does tend to undermine one's self-confidence and waste time.

The other reason to have a final look around before executing one's plan is maximalism. I believe it was Emanuel Lasker who advised that once you have found a strong move you should look for an even stronger one. If he didn't say it, I think he would have approved.

Experience will help determine when there is most to be gained by this kind of perfectionism. My feeling is that perfectionism should be subdued as much as possible during a game<sup>1</sup>. It is by nature impractical. When training, this intense striving for absolute accuracy can be very helpful but when playing one must put a priority on pragmatism. One phase of the game that rewards this attitude of wanting something even better is when one is nearing victory. Then this cold-blooded search for the most devastating move can drastically shorten the game. One also weeds out seeds of resistance before they can grow, and avoids relaxing prematurely.

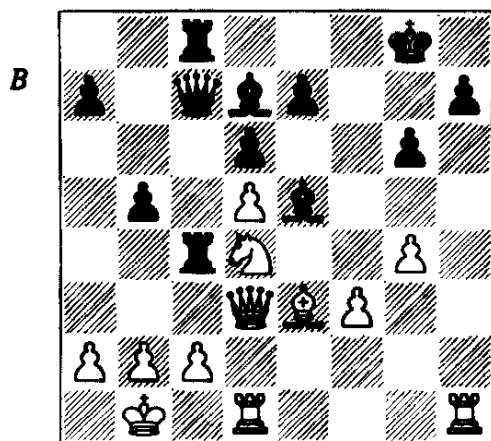
### **Calculating in defence**

Now I would like to look at a situation which arose in one of my own games. This specimen also lends itself well to

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1 See Churchill quote in the Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice.

solution, and has the additional advantage of my knowing absolutely the thought-process of the player involved. Tactical calculation in defence dominates this time, which puts a slightly different spin on the approach. Now the search concentrates even more on aiming to pare down the candidates to the most critical, and to examine the most critical *first*. I cannot see the point of checking possibly suspect variations except as a last resort when defending.



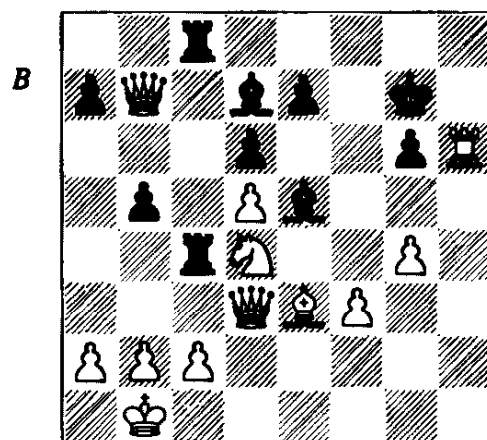
**R. Djurhuus – J. Tisdall**  
*Reykjavik Open 1996*

Here I felt that the position demanded I play 20...Qb7. If I had a memory, I might have understood that this urge was due to it having been played before, in a game I had seen. If I had a memory and had prepared properly, the calculations necessary to play this move might have been done earlier, at home, but that is another story.

Anyway, there I was, wanting to play 20...Qb7, the most natural way to put pressure on White's position, and

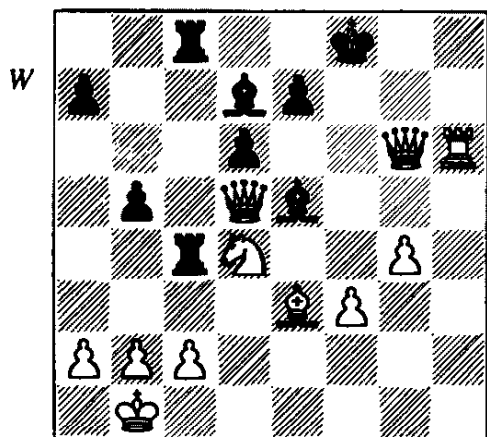
needing to know if the equally natural reply 21 Rxb7 posed a serious threat to my survival. Answering that question is the point of this exercise. Note that in this example, we do not have the luxury of a safe approach to a later point of the analysis – it must all be done from the start, or we risk landing in a hopeless position.

20...Qb7 21 Rxb7 Qxb7 22 Rh1+ Kg7 23 Rh6 (D) is the natural starting point for the analysis.



a) 23...Qxd5 was first on my list. It removes a potential attacker (the d5-pawn could be murder on e6) and brings the queen over to the critical sector. With all this going for it, I may be able to refute the variation without perusing alternatives. OK, White *can* win the queen, but that looks like it leads to a typical Dragon counterattack... 24 Qf5+ Qxf5 25 Qxd5 Rxc2. This must be the end of the world for White... 26 gxf5 Rxb2+ 27 Ka1 Rb4+. That was encouraging. White *must* attack the king: 24 Qxg6+ Qf8 (D).

Now I am controlling two key defensive diagonals. What can go wrong? Wait ... if the white rook were not



there  $\text{♙h6+}$  would be painful ... 25  $\text{♜h8+! ♙xh8}$  26  $\text{♙h6+ ♙g7}$  27  $\text{♜xg7+ ♚e8}$  28  $\text{♜f8\#}$ .

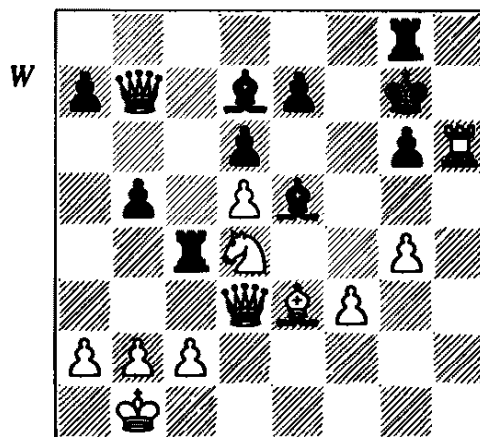
Back to the drawing board. This combination should make a strong impression. *We have now identified a key tactical motif for White.* By considering this, we can deduce that in fact the critical sector for the defence to influence must be squares like h8, g6 and h6. With this abstraction in mind, the best move comes rather quickly into the field of candidates, despite it not being a terribly 'natural' move. (This really is how the move 23... $\text{♜g8}$  crossed my mind's eye; it is not just advertising. Constantly processing the information gleaned from concrete lines into verbal terms that can help us interpret the vital signs of the position is an essential part of the technique.) First a look at an obvious defence.

b) 23... $\text{♙e8}$ . I find this hard to believe; allowing the knight into e6 with tempo must be a fatal addition to the attacking equation. I'm tempted to draw up a wider list of defensive alternatives now, but since we are facing greater danger than anticipated, it might be helpful to check this obvious

branch quickly. 24  $\text{♞e6+ ♚g8}$  25  $\text{♜xg6+ ♙xg6}$  26  $\text{♜xg6+ ♚h8}$  27  $\text{♙h6 ♜g8}$  28  $\text{♜h5}$  and I don't think I need to see more. (Or 28  $\text{♙g7+!! ♜xg7}$  29  $\text{♜h5+ ♚g8}$  30  $\text{♜e8+ ♚h7}$  31  $\text{♞f8+ ♚g8}$  32  $\text{♞g6+ ♚h7}$  33  $\text{♜h8+ ♚xg6}$  34  $\text{♜h5+ ♚f6}$  35  $\text{♜f5\#}$  if you're really thorough! I had a student who found this variation and announced that the solution of the exercise was mate in 15! An interesting example of a blend of tactical talent and complete lack of objectivity, but not all diagnoses are so easy for a trainer.)

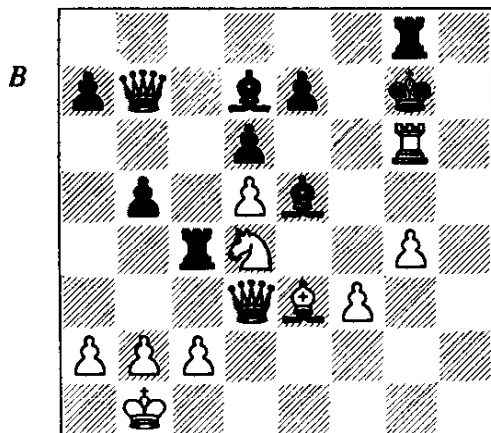
On to the best defence. After a pause to examine the contours of the position (outlined above while calculating the first variation), a candidate emerges that seems to fit the desired profile:

c) 23... $\text{♜g8! (D)}$ .



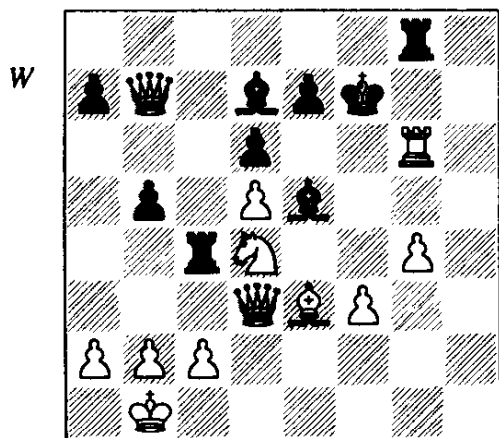
24  $\text{♜xg6+ (D)}$  seems to be most critical – after all, Black's defence is aimed at making g6 less palatable to the queen. To be safe I must check the alternative: 24  $\text{♜xg6+ ♚f8}$  ... I'm hitting g6 so there is no time for  $\text{♞e6+}$  followed by  $\text{dx6}$ . I'm covering h8 and g7 more than enough times. All

wonderful by-products of 23...♖g8, which does everything it was supposed to here.



Now the f-file must be the way to go. Is there a difference between the squares? On f8 the e3-bishop can enter with tempo ... so f7 seems safer. (Natural, but wrong, which leads to the necessity of calculating more variations.)

c1) 24...♔f7 (D).



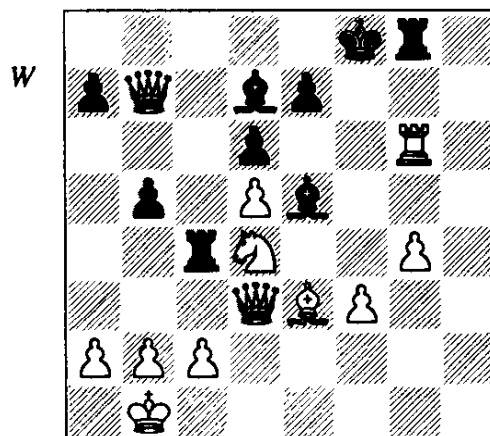
c11) 25 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 26 ♕g6+ ♔h8. There is no way White can strengthen the attack here. Draw by perpetual – that's life in sharp openings. (Against a weaker player this might convince Black to reject 20...♕b7 but Djurhuus

is ambitious to the core, is having a good tournament and itching for personal revenge...)

c12) 25 ♖e6!! Uh-oh – the rook on g8 is glued to the defence of d8 – and if I capture on e6, the pawn enters the attack with check... Now the main threat is ♖xg8 leading a finish like in the ...♔e8 defence, and ♕f5+ looks fatal as well. If I take the knight... 25...♔xe6 26 dxe6+ ♔f8 27 ♕f5+ ♔f6 28 ♔h6+ ♖g7 29 ♖xg7 is feeble so the only alternative I see is 25...♖xg6 26 ♖d8+ ♔e8 27 ♖xb7. Well, I would not resign here, but I have a feeling I might have to when White's queen rolls into the kingside. If this is the best I can do 20...♕b7 invites complete embarrassment – getting the queen forked there! Am I lost?

Wait, what went wrong here was that I allowed White to use the e6-square effectively; the pawn entering the attack is especially deadly. Perhaps f8 was the right retreat-square – but can that help? White has a check on h6 that would seem to force similar lines. One quick look ...

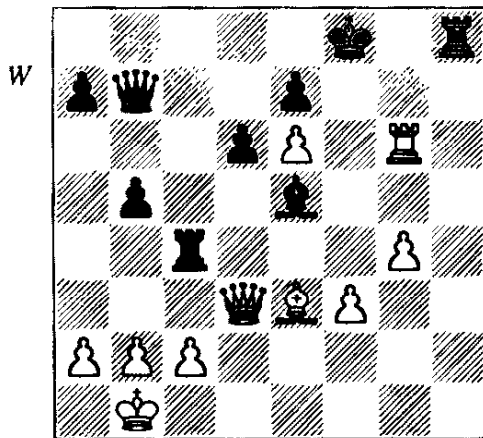
c2) 24...♔f8!! (D).



Now there are two scary tries – trying to reach a line like the one above, and trying to exploit the e6-square at once. (Of course 25 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 26 ♚g6+ ♔h8 27 ♚h6+ ♔g8 28 ♚g6+ with perpetual check remains a recurring option.)

c21) 25 ♔h6+ ♚f7 26 ♜e6 (is there any difference this time?) 26...♞xg6 27 ♜d8+ ♚e8! 28 ♜xb7. Yes! How sweet – now 28...♞xh6 is possible and White has been punished for the ‘free’ move ♔h6 – very satisfying.

c22) 25 ♜e6+ ♔xe6 26 dxe6 ♞h8! (D). Examining this move first cuts out the need to examine side-variations (26...♞xg6 27 ♚xg6; 26...♔g7 27 ♚f5+; 26...♚xf3 27 ♔h6+; 26...♞f4 27 ♔xf4 ♔xf4 28 ♚f5+).



This move should be the ‘natural’ one as well – finding ...♞g8 was based on the desire to guard key squares and now none of them is as key as h6. A quick look to check if our intuition is correct and our defences hold: 27 ♔h6+ (27 ♚f5+ ♚e8) 27...♞xh6 28 ♞xh6 ♞f4 and with f7 and h8 guarded it will take White far too long to drum up a threat.

**Conclusion:** Again we can see the usefulness of the combined approach of concrete calculation and a verbal, abstract synthesis of the position. This example reinforces my feeling that changing the priority of subvariations can be a useful technique depending on whether one is defending or attacking. I think we can see in the last example that Black’s effectiveness was improved by consciously tackling the apparently difficult lines first. This is only logical, since his task was survival, while in Kotov’s position there was more of a sorting of promising lines.

There were many junctures in Djurhuus-Tisdall where Black was aided by prior images, both from studying the opening (some of the early candidate moves), and of some sense of its natural contours (for example, the willingness to consider ‘losing’ the queen in the variation with 23...♚xd5). These are concrete examples of intuition based on experience, which can influence one’s play even if one is handicapped with a faulty memory. The most important factor is that these images lodge in some accessible part of the brain.

It also occurred to me that a solid alternative could be the regrouping 20...♞f8 followed by ...♞f7 (again prompted by some half-forgotten memory?). But I didn’t triple on the c-file to use the f-file. I would give this consideration much greater attention if I were not satisfied with the results of the main analysis though. There is no reason to be inflexible,

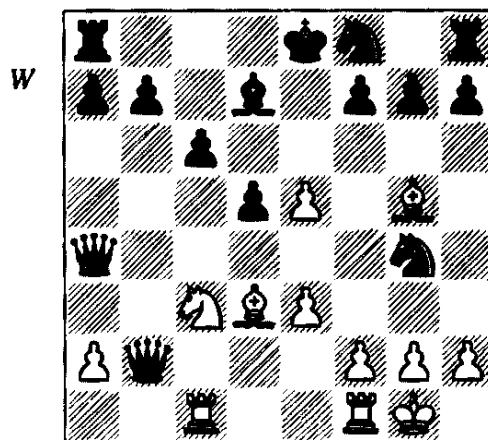
and the f-file also has its attractions. (But does 21 ♖xh7 win here...?)

White eventually chose 21 ♗e4 in the game. So all was well, and White did not want a draw. How quickly to make the decision to play 20...♗b7? White moves other than 21 ♖xh7 must be considered during a game, at least a bit? A tough decision, but to be honest, I didn't waste too much time on that. One could proceed on the assumption that if the most threatening continuation holds up for Black then the move is viable, but this is a dangerous attitude.

On the other hand, despite the complex nature of the position, the number of choices is quite limited. Both sides have very clear ambitions, and this makes their respective positions a bit one-sided. For example, White's knight on d4 is the only thing holding back a vicious black attack. The move chosen by White in the game is practically the only way to maintain the d5-pawn and his queenside. So Black could have examined the game alternative closely as well. Due to the practical problems of solving the sacrificial line, however, I did not want to use much more time. I felt the awkward self-pin on the vital d4-knight set up by 21 ♗e4 should allow me a sensible reply (especially as it is not clear how White's attack has been strengthened by this move), and wanted to work on it a bit more on my opponent's time. A practical, though debatable, decision but practical considerations should never be underestimated. I was not presenting a dissertation on the position, but

playing it with limited time. What in fact happened is that my opponent soon went seriously astray, pressured by the demands of the position and the fact that I played my 21st move very quickly (21...e6!?).

While working on this material and thinking through the examples for this book, I began to wonder more and more why such an extremely *natural* process of calculation had not been discussed earlier. Perhaps it has, and has just escaped my research. This research did uncover some examples of corroboratory evidence, however. Other writers may not have actively advocated some of the techniques of variation processing, but often show signs of using it. Most cheering during this research phase were the following examples from Mark Dvoretsky, the virtually undisputed 'world champion' of trainers.



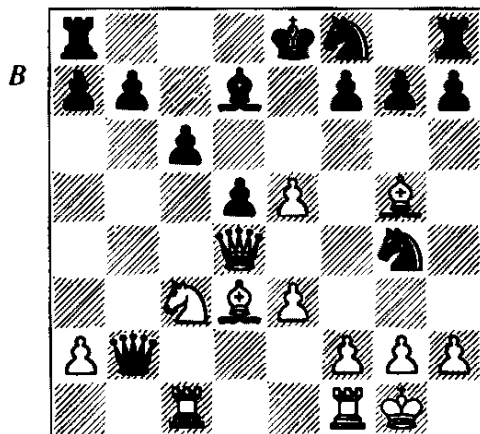
**A. Yusupov – J. Nogueiras**  
*Montpellier Ct 1985*

This position from the game Yusupov-Nogueiras features in Dvoretsky's book, *Secrets of Chess Tactics*, in

the section 'Candidate moves'. Here we have an illustration that, despite a prologue in this section of Dvoretsky's book listing the merits of Kotov's method, practice shows something quite different. (I should stress that Dvoretsky also suggests that Kotov's is of most use as a training rather than practical tool.)

I want to underline Dvoretsky's account of his protégé's reflections: "White's first thought here was to bring all of his pieces into play with 14 ♖c2 ♜b6 15 ♖b1. However, after 15... ♜c7 16 ♘xd5 ♜xe5 or 16 ♙f4 ♘e6 Black somehow holds on. Again Yusupov asked himself which were his candidate moves. As a result he found a deadly solution."

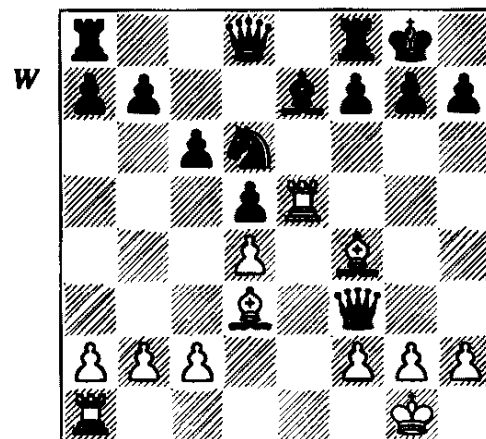
(He found the lethal 14 ♜d4!! (D) setting up a dazzling array of threats.)



No one disputes the importance of the task of establishing candidate moves. My main argument is that it cannot be used indiscriminately. Observe that Yusupov, an extremely disciplined player with great faith in the candidate process, tackled the position by examining a *natural critical variation*

*first*. Failure to clarify the position with the use of this approach led to a conscious catalogue of alternative possibilities.

The next exhibit for the defence of variation processing also comes from *Secrets of Chess Tactics*. This time, we get a revealing look at Dvoretsky's own thought-processes.



M. Dvoretsky – H. Schüssler  
Tbilisi 1980

Here Dvoretsky provides further, implicit evidence that experienced players do not analyse like Kotovian trees. It is also an excellent example of some of the psychological concerns we address in our internal monologues.

Dvoretsky asks "What should White play?" and goes on to say "I didn't doubt that the sacrifice of the bishop was correct. *Therefore I intended to take on h7 without thinking*, in order to see which defence my opponent would choose after 16 ♙xh7+ ♜xh7 17 ♖h5+ ♜g8 18 ♜h3 – 18...f6 or 18...f5 *and only then to calculate the variations.*" (emphasis mine, since we

have already expressed an interest in such practical considerations).

Dvoretsky goes on to say that he luckily did not commit “such a stupid error” but examined a few lines nevertheless and found that the sacrifice was far from convincing. He continues: “Two or three times I was distracted from sacrificing the bishop and weighed up other natural moves; for example 16 ♖ae1.”

But his search did not satisfy him, and he then returned to examining the bishop offer. (He notes that this contravenes Kotov’s principle that one should not constantly return to calculated lines.) He then relates that he suddenly found a new idea and played it only after brief reflection. This reminds one strikingly of Kotov’s ‘sales pitch’, where the muddled thinker abruptly plays a new choice. Fortunately for Dvoretsky, and no doubt thanks to the strength of his intuition, his ‘irrational’ process resulted in the correct move (16 ♖g3). Most interesting for me, is Dvoretsky’s final conclusion: “I do not blame myself that I had been immediately diverted by calculation of the bishop sacrifice – it seemed too tempting. *But as soon as it became clear that the sacrifice did not lead to a forced win, it was essential to pause and compile a full list of candidate moves.*” (emphasis Dvoretsky’s).

I could not agree more. This pause, stepping back to have a fresh, calm look is excellent advice and sometimes has a near magical effect. I have used this example in discussions with students, and just by reading this

quote have seen some react by suddenly blurting out “♖g3!” – which they had not seen before – in a tone of mild revelation.

The ‘diversion’ was natural and efficient – one must be prepared to listen to one’s intuition, and as I have stressed before, it is this process that in general will bring best results. His conclusion is, as ever, highly instructive. Dvoretsky and Yusupov have given us another guideline as to when a list of candidates brings best results. Not only when we face a number of apparently equivalent options, but when we face an impasse. The Kotovian sins of losing time and rehashing lines would have been avoided with a timely catalogue of possibilities, but I would stress that it is just as noteworthy that the first pass involved an intuitive attempt to deal with the position with a single, critical branch.

From my own philosophy, and the support of this example and similar personal experiences, I would even go so far as to suggest that *the creation of candidate lists is never the primary task*. By leaning towards an instinctive choice first, we activate our intuition (and experience), engage the practical aspect of play by preparing to make a decision, and initiate an examination of the abstract factors of a position. All of which in turn guide our concrete analysis and begins the process of sorting likely candidate moves. This is likely to be even more relevant in positions of a purely tactical nature.

This seems like a good time for another cautionary tale. Even armed



with experience and long contemplation of the advice we have discussed, it remains easy to forget how important it is to adjust when the search for a clearly best move breaks down.

### A cautionary tale

*"Shave on somebody else's face."* – GM Arnold Denker

This odd expression has stuck with me ever since I heard it uttered by the veteran American GM. What does Denker mean? He means that instead of cutting yourself, try to learn from watching other people have accidents. Here I offer my face for the reader's examination.

**P. Nikolić – J. Tisdall**  
*Reykjavik 1996*

This game was played in the penultimate round, and I was leading a very strong field by half a point. I give the prelude to the instructive moment with light notes, concentrating instead on the subjective factors, nerves and psychology, that affected the game.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3 e6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♙e2

A rather uncommon move and not Nikolić's usual choice.

6...♙d6 7 0-0 0-0 8 b3

By leaving out ♖c2 White puts less pressure on Black, who does not have to watch out for e4 yet.

8...♖e7

8...b6 was maybe the most flexible.

9 ♙b2 b6 10 ♖c2 ♙b7 11 e4 ♘xe4 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♖xe4 f5!

This seems to be very strong here – the e4-square gives Black active play and White has surprising difficulty in keeping e5 profitably under control.

14 ♖e3

14 ♖h4 is more prudent. I intended 14...c5! (14...♖xh4 15 ♘xh4 c5 is less accurate since it allows White the favourable exchange 16 ♙f3) 15 ♖xe7 ♙xe7 16 dxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 with comfortable play for Black.

14...c5

This position seems better for Black – his pieces are more actively placed and there are many ways to liberate the centre.

15 ♖ad1

Not 15 ♘e5?? cxd4 16 ♙xd4 f4 17 ♖c3 ♙xe5 18 ♙xe5 ♖g5 and Black wins.

15...♖ad8 16 dxc5

16 ♘g5 ♖de8 (16...♖fe8!? – Nikolić) and White will waste more time with the knight than Black with his rook.

16...♙xc5 17 ♖g5

Now White is eager to trade to relieve the pressure, but Black does not cooperate (yet).

17...♘f6 18 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 19 ♘e5

Nikolić later admitted that he disliked his position so much here that he considered a full grovel with 19 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 20 ♖xf6 gxf6 21 ♖d1 but not only is this distinctly unpalatable, it would also remove any hope of Black developing a disorder of the nerves. This line would give Black a comfortable and utterly safe advantage.

At this stage there were two sets of dominant psychological factors. First,

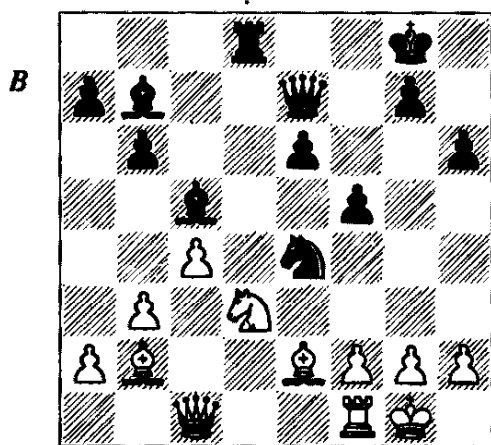
I was growing intoxicated with what was clearly a charmed event for me. Riding a wave of success, I found myself playing quickly and easily and at this stage my opponent had just over half an hour for the rest of the game, while I had about an hour and a quarter. Not only could I feel the accumulated confidence of the earlier rounds, but I could also see that I stood better here in every possible way.

Added to this was the sight of my esteemed opponent, who was using vast amounts of time and was visibly depressed as his chance to move into first place had transformed into prospects of disaster. These elements now combine to create a kind of imbalance which Kotov aptly called 'Dizziness due to success'.

19...h6 20 ♖c1 ♘e4

Everything goes forward smoothly. Black eyes the squares d2 and f2, and e5 is soon to come under control as well.

21 ♘d3 (D)



21...♞xd3??

I subsequently nominated this move for an 'Elmer Fudd award', in honour

of the huntsman eternally outwitted by Bugs Bunny. The explanation for this is that the whole process behind this move reminds me of the classic cartoon routine; I am seized an irresistible desire to blow my opponent's head off. I then proceed to use most of my time calculating and recalculating the variations associated with the sacrifice. I cannot make it work, but keep trying... Finally, after listening to the frustrating clicks of the weapon refusing to fire, I perform the chess equivalent of pointing it at my face, looking down the barrel, and pulling the trigger one more time – with the usual result.

The reflex reaction here was to set the centre in motion by 21...♞d6, and this captured my attention for a brief span. While this is tempting, it has the disadvantage of making Black's dark-squared bishop inferior to White's. (That is, when the black pawn advances to e5 pressure will be mounted with the aid of the b2-bishop, while the d6-bishop will, at least temporarily, be assigned a defensive role.) This is in fact the key strategic theme here, and if I had had the composure to think as rationally as in previous rounds it would almost certainly have struck me. Instead, I was playing my strategic moves solely on the basis of what I felt was my inspired feel for the game, and spicing this up with the occasional tactical calculation. There was absolutely no sense of detachment or calm reflection.

While I was sitting around wasting my time, Nikolić noticed that

21...♙d4! simply gives Black a gigantic edge. Black removes White's best piece, and takes even firmer control of the d-file and centre. I don't know exactly how to weigh Black's advantage here; but I would wager that Nikolić would beat himself with Black here fairly regularly. One sample variation we looked at is 22 ♙xd4 ♞xd4 23 f3 ♞xd3 24 ♙xd3 ♞c5+ 25 ♖h1 ♜f2+ 26 ♞xf2 ♞xf2 27 ♙b1 ♖f7 and White's position is excruciatingly passive.

Meanwhile, I had noticed how dangerous the text-move was, and now my 'intuition' convinced me that the sacrifice had to be justified. My opponent is in full retreat, obviously dispirited, and everything is going my way. The fact that I could not successfully extract a single convincing variation during this internal struggle between desire and reason was insufficient to curb my obsession with not only winning, but winning in style.

22 ♙xd3 ♞h4 23 ♞e1! ♞g5?

And this is also feeble, but now reality had set in, with profoundly depressing effect. A better attempt is 23...♙d6!? though White wins with accurate play: 24 g3 (24 h3? ♞f4 25 g3 ♞f3 26 ♙e2 ♜g5) 24...♜g5 (24...♞h3 25 ♙xe4 {25 f3 ♙c5+ 26 ♖h1 ♜g5 27 ♙e2} 25...♙xe4 26 f3) 25 ♞xe6+! ♜xe6 26 gxf4 ♜f4 27 ♞d1 ♙f3 28 c5! (even stronger than 28 ♙c2) and White wins the ending easily. If 23...♜g5, then 24 ♞e5 and the white queen hits g7 and prepares to drop back to g3 if needed.

24 ♖h1!

Most efficient.

24...♜d2 25 ♞xe6+ ♖f8 26 ♞g1 ♜e4 27 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 28 ♙d4!

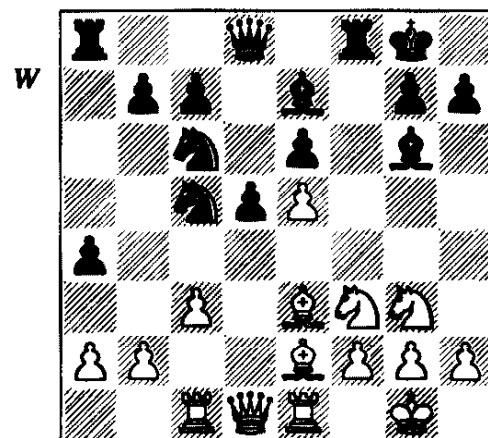
As Porky Pig says, "Th-that's all folks."

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The moral of this sad tale could hardly be clearer.

### Talking to yourself

Here is another example of a conversational, 'anti-Kotovian' episode, which I ran across while finishing this book. GM Gregory Kaidanov writes in *Inside Chess*, 9 December 1996, about his thought-process as Black to move in this position:



I. Foigel – G. Kaidanov  
Boston 1995

Kaidanov's first comments when discussing this position are to refer to Kotov's theory of candidate moves. Like so many players raised in the shadow of Kotov's teaching, he outlines the theory, gives it credit, and then says that it does not *always* work. I always get the impression that there

is a fear of being branded a heretic if and when someone ventures to criticize the gospel according to Kotov. You almost expect the Spanish Inquisition. Even players of Kaidanov's stature get apologetic for thinking like people instead of shrubbery. Anyway, Kaidanov gives us a glimpse into how he really thinks, or at least how he thought here:

"First I looked at 16...♗e4 but didn't like it in view of 17 ♘xe4 dxe4 18 ♚xd8 ♙axd8 19 ♘g5. Then I considered 16...♘d7 but rejected it because of 17 ♘d4. Next I asked myself, 'OK what is White's next move?' The answer was 17 c4; this is why he played ♙c1. It was only after that I came up with a move, which originally was not among my candidates."

Although Kaidanov has not gone into detail about how his ruminations resulted in his actual choice of move, there are a number of details here worth stressing. First, this is a very clear case of an impasse being cleared by an internal chat. Also, it seems to me from the way Kaidanov relates this tale, that he gets his candidates from a quick, concrete examination of the moves that appeal to him. This is not explicit – perhaps he just drew up a short list and didn't like what he saw. But since he gives this process as an exception to Kotov's procedure, I infer that his little internal dialogue took place before what would normally be a conscious 'shopping list' of potential candidates. The result of his conversation was:

16...♚c8!!

"This move does everything:

1) It protects the pawn on e6 and so prepares both 17...♘d7 and ...♗e4.

2) Now 17 c4 is inadvisable in view of 17...♙d8!." – Kaidanov.

There is only one other thing I would add here. This example is in fact a classic example of *prophylactic* thinking. Kaidanov's thought-process did not (at least as presented) deal so much with the elements of the position revealed by the concrete variations he first examined. It was instead addressed to the opponent's possibilities, and reacting to or restricting them. This is also an extremely important way of approaching a position, and will be discussed again elsewhere in the book.

### Would Kotov agree?

As heretical as some of this chapter may seem, I think that even Kotov would admit that there is good reason to consider the method of thinking outlined here. Although the tree of analysis is probably Kotov's most enduring contribution to chess teaching, he too advocated the knitting together of the two approaches, abstract and concrete. This is very easy to overlook. A careful reading of *Think Like a Grandmaster*, some hundred pages after the discussion of arboreal husbandry (p. 134 of the algebraic edition), reveals the following statement, in a section on positional judgement:

"I hope these examples of how to combine general formulae with concrete variations will help the reader to

understand this important topic. I recommend him to use general formulae, to define in words what the immediate plans of each side are, both in his own games and in analysing grandmaster games.”

While this is not at all the *same* as the process outlined in this chapter, it indicates again the wisdom of trying to combine the different approaches to examining a position. In fact, the positional judgement section of Kotov’s book purports to show how positional assessments should be combined with concrete analysis, but the examples almost exclusively employ abstract assessments, just as his analytical chapter was almost exclusively based on variations.

Kotov implies that this is a useful way to begin understanding the strategic currents in a game. I think that it is of even greater use when calculating, and as a practical tool. To repeat, instead of just using general positional guidelines, one should also try to translate the findings of concrete variations into a general, verbal form. The extremely scientific approach outlined

in Kotov’s Tree of Analysis is better suited for study.

### **The last word**

*“Old people have fewer diseases than the young, but their diseases never leave them.”* – Hippocrates (460-370 BC)

If there is any one factor that may have influenced my recent modest increase in success<sup>1</sup>, I think it is this conscious knitting of abstract thought and concrete calculation. The added emphasis on the intuitive side of the game, and using it to harness the scientific side of the brain gives one’s play a type of harmony that I find both satisfying and rewarding. For others the emphasis may well need to be the other way round, finding a way to enhance a general approach with concrete calculating skills.

Unfortunately, for those of us with a lifetime of bad habits, there will always be problems, recurring and new, to overcome. Still, every little step forward helps.

## **Chapter Summary**

**Talk to yourself** – not out loud of course – that’s against the rules, and chess players have a shaky enough reputation already.

**Try to determine your next move by examining one principal variation.** This variation may either be the one which first or most strongly appeals, or which you feel seems to fit the strategic demands of the position.

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1 Since writing this I seem to have slipped back to my more familiar bumbling ways, but that only reinforces the point of the next paragraph.

**Process the concrete variations calculated**, into themes and positional factors and use them to determine what moves are likely to be relevant. *Use* the information gathered on your calculations, and try to render it in verbal form that makes it useful for further searches. Describe your findings.

**Do not be afraid to use intuition**, or abstract factors when seeking lines to calculate.

**If your primary variation is unsatisfactory**, calm down, lean back, and make a thorough list of possible candidates with fresh eyes. While using intuition to begin work on a position has merits, some order has to be brought in *quickly*. Otherwise there is no balance in one's approach, and the grave danger of simply firing off random lines exists. If your first shot is off target, you need a wider view.

**The times for a conscious listing of candidate moves are quite logical**: when one pauses naturally due to an obvious wealth of alternatives, or when one's preliminary calculations have not achieved the desired result. In sharp, tactical positions it is extremely important to make a *comprehensive* list at these times.

There is one other time when it can be rewarding to have a careful scan of possible moves. Having decided on a course of action, it can often be worthwhile to have one last, attentive inventory of the board. This can be impractical if one plunges into thought anew, but it often turns up something important. This can be a potential blunder that went overlooked while you were immersed in other details. Most often, this last check is useful in very good positions, to seek out an absolutely crushing move instead of a reasonably strong one.

**Have faith in your calculations.** You may be wrong, but you have only yourself to trust. If you are often wrong, it just means that you need to improve this ability, but when you use it, you *must* trust it.

**In predominantly strategic games**, the search process is similar, but the calculation of concrete variations will be less important than the internal discussion of positional elements.

## 2 Blindfold Chess and Stepping-Stone Diagrams

*“The block of granite which was an obstacle in the pathway of the weak becomes a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong.”* – Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), British historian and essayist

Here I want to discuss the major set of ‘middlegame muscles’ – the powers of clarity and depth of calculation. Like any other muscle group, it can be exercised and its strength increased. In my opinion, the most reliable method to do this is by directed blindfold practice.

When I discussed some of the ideas and methods in this chapter during the writing of this book, I found them surprisingly controversial. Most convinced of this method’s efficacy are those who have a knack for blindfold calculation in the first place and are, say, beginning to lose this ability. Many are sceptical, why I cannot quite understand. Of course I am biased.

Paradoxically, most of those I talked to who *are* sceptical, also confess to calculation not being their strong point. While it is easy to over-value calculation, there can be no doubt that it is a vital skill, and honing it can only be beneficial. And, this technique works.

Another common question: is this *really* helpful for practical chess? This also never fails to surprise me. Perhaps it is because blindfold chess is strongly associated with mental strain,

with unusual exhibitions and so has acquired a mystique, the chess equivalent of a parlour trick. But when one calculates one is playing blindfold, therefore we are doing this virtually *every move*.

*“The whole game of chess is played as a blindfold game. For instance, every combination of five moves is executed mentally, with the only difference that one has the board before him. The pieces which one is looking at very often hinder the calculations.”* – Dr Siegbert Tarrasch

It is intriguing to note the habit of certain young players (Shirov, Ivanchuk and Svidler come immediately to mind) who often calculate variations by suddenly staring into space instead of at the board. Clearly, they have some built-in belief that they can more clearly focus their visualization of critical variations by looking *away* from the board. Probably their powers of visualization or calculation are so trusted that at the ends of long variations they prefer to check their conclusions without having the current board position as a *distraction*. If so,

this speaks volumes for the utility of being able to calculate blind.

### **Improving calculating power**

*“Old minds are like old horses; you must exercise them if you wish to keep them in working order.”* – John Adams

The strengthening of one’s mental powers in regard to visualization and calculation is one of my pet themes, and as far as I know, there has been very little, if anything, written about the subject – at least from a pedagogic point of view. My interest in this topic was awakened by an unmistakable deterioration of my ability to analyse without a board. In my youth, there was simply no need for a set when working, and no noticeable difference (to me at least) when calculating blind. Whether this change was due to less time spent studying (possible) or the advancing years (almost certainly), I found this alarming and wondered what to do about it.

The development of the kind of training I will put forward has its roots in two personal experiences. The first came about from a conversation with GM Alexander Beliavsky. I was trying to get him to disclose some training secrets common in the (then) USSR. He claimed (to my disappointment) that most of the Soviet players simply found their own ways to work. He mentioned one technique of his own which immediately impressed me.

Beliavsky explained that between tournaments he tried to play through and analyse at least five games a day – blindfold. I had noticed that my ability to calculate easily without a board had been gradually weakening over the years, and that it certainly suffered between tournaments. Beliavsky’s suggestion seemed to me to exercise vital chess ‘muscles’ that had been neglected. I immediately adopted this idea, and when I was sufficiently industrious to actually implement it, felt a noticeable recuperation in my atrophying brain.

Putting this technique into practice can be difficult for players whose ability to visualize blindfold has not been developed – and this is where the second method comes in.

This method for improving one’s ability to calculate deeply and clearly had occurred to me some years before.

### **Stepping Stones**

During a tournament, I noticed that I was suddenly having real troubles calculating properly. This was due partly to fatigue, and some other sporting factors that are less clear – maybe lack of practice, poor chess or physical form, etc.<sup>1</sup> At a critical point in the game, it occurred to me to try to ‘reset’ the position I was calculating in my mind. This led to what I call the ‘stepping-stone’ method of calculation. It is a terribly simple idea, which may

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1 Perhaps that long tour of the mountain taverns on the Swiss border?



he why it has not attracted particular notice. It is also easy to use, and to test.

Basically, all players can calculate ahead, it is only the depth which differs. For example, if one begins to play a game blindfold, a player will on average be able to see more deeply at the beginning of the game, than he will when calculating a position later in the game. This is due, I think, to the familiarity with the starting position, as much as one's proximity to it.

One could argue that there are also differences in breadth – the number of variations considered, or in this case, visualized. However, by applying the stepping-stone method one should always be able to return to the branching point, and then explore a new possibility with equal clarity.

The stepping-stone technique consists simply of resetting the mind's eye on the position at that point at which the student feels he is beginning to lose focus. If the natural comfortable depth of a player's calculation is three moves, then when that level is approached, the student should begin to make a systematic effort to burn the characteristics of the new position into the mind's eye. One first sets down stepping stones at the natural length of one's 'stride'. Anything more is obviously less natural and less efficient.

Which pieces have moved? – visualize them on their new squares. Remove pieces that have been exchanged. Bring that position as clearly into focus as one sees the start position in one's head, or the current position on

the board when calculating in competition. When this is done, one can begin to calculate again. With practice of this kind of 'diagram projection' (and Beliavsky's regimen of blindfold training), one can gradually extend the depth to which one can calculate clearly.

I realize that it sounds absurdly simple, but at the risk of sounding like an 'infomercial', that is the beauty of it. If you can bring *one* position into clear focus when desired, you have everything you need to extend the range of your calculating ability. I found that by applying this technique, I could more or less reproduce my formerly normal mode of calculating. Even on days when some strange kind of mental fog rolled in, it was possible to navigate by mapping out stepping-stone positions. I have seen students use it and, with practice, extend their limits.

I later noticed that some books present material in this method. This was reassuring, though it surprised me that no one had noticed the practical applications. For example, there are books which present very deep combinations with extra diagrams along the way. This aids the reader who wants to try to find the solution(s), but in fact it is a perfect example of what one should try to achieve when calculating deeply – setting up a new, clear position at critical stages on a long and difficult path. The diagrams in Chapter 1, *The Fabled Tree of Analysis*, were selected to represent the natural stepping stones used in the solution of those positions.

Here are some of the positions which I use to help to develop this technique. First, we begin with opening questions and traps, to guarantee that the depth of visualization is not too great. This, of course, depends on the level of skill of the student.

I attach notes to the examples here to emphasize other points of the exercises. It is not *just* the brute force muscles that are being enhanced here. Certain kinds of standard thinking are also tested, as well as well-known potential blind spots – that occur most often with one's eyes wide open.

It is important to mention that precautions should be taken to avoid the artificial visual distraction of the game score when doing this work. When one calculates during a game, or from a problem diagram, one has a clear point of original focus. There is a very natural tendency to be put off by having a list of the moves.

My experience with groups is that it is easier to play through games purely blind, just hearing the moves. Concentrating on just the moves takes some practice. Cover them up as you read them. Otherwise the following process sets in: lazy focus, followed by constant rereading of the previous moves. Then you start to check the score just to make sure you remember where that black knight is, and so on. You do not concentrate on bringing the position into focus and the cycle repeats itself, with more and more glances at the moves to verify the whereabouts of pieces lost in the fog. One must try to make this process as

realistic as possible, and 'losing' the score of the game is necessary for this.

Another important aspect of playing through games blindfold, is to do it precisely as one would with the pieces. Don't just pull the position into focus when necessary and then move on, satisfied. Ask yourself questions – a game in one's mind's eye should provoke even more questions than normally posed by the inscrutable moves of the masters.

### Examples

Here is one of my favourites for the opening section. After the moves **1 e4** ♖f6 **2** ♘c3 **d5** **3** e5 **d4** **4** ♘ce2 ♘e4 **5** c3 **dxc3** what should White play?

This illustrates one of the handiest tactical themes early in the game – a queen check that also attacks a loose piece. If one has primed the student with classic examples like **1** d4 ♖f6 **2** ♙g5 c6 **3** e3??, then most likely the reaction above (6 ♙a4+) will come with speed and confidence. In fact, the example above is also designed to test scepticism and objectivity. 6 ♙a4+ is an error after 6...♘d7! and White encounters embarrassing difficulties on the c5-square. This is a very rare loophole in the old ♙a4+ routine.

The next stage is miniature games. Short games with difficult tactical points are particularly useful – these allow for the student to definitely bring the position into focus, but the resulting position is not easy; brainwork is required once focus is achieved. Sokolov-Savko is one of my favourites.

**A. Sokolov – A. Savko***Latvian Ch 1994*

1 c4 ♖f6 2 ♖c3 e5 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5  
 ♖xd5 5 ♗g2 ♖b6 6 ♖f3 ♖c6 7 0-0  
 ♗e7 8 a3 0-0 9 b4 ♗e6 10 d3 a5 11  
 b5 ♖d4 12 ♖b1 f6 13 ♖d2 ♖d5

What happened now?

The position looks very harmless, and shows the power of prejudice. Even with full sight of the board Black did not seriously consider White trading his powerful fianchettoed bishop for a knight. 14 ♗xd5! wins a piece after 14...♗xd5 15 e3. This is very hard to see, despite the relatively small number of moves. This example exercises imagination and objectivity.

**Y. Chachalev – A. Ayupbergenov***Volgograd 1994*

1 e4 ♖f6 2 e5 ♖d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♖f3  
 dxe5 5 ♖xe5 g6 6 ♗c4 c6 7 ♖f3 ♗e6  
 8 ♖c3 ♖d7 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♖e1 0-0 11  
 ♗d2 ♖xe5 12 dxe5

What happened now?

This is 'just' an exercise in clarity of calculation. A number of short concise variations answer the question. I assume that these will be easy enough to spot over-the-board if not in-the-head, so I will not provide a spoiler.

**P. Svidler – V. Malaniuk***St Petersburg 1994*

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4  
 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♗b4 6 ♖xc6 bxc6 7 ♗d3

d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♗g5 c6  
 11 ♖a4 h6 12 ♗h4 ♖e8 13 c4 ♗d6 14  
 cxd5 cxd5 15 ♖c3 ♗e5 16 ♖xd5

What happened now? What was the point of White's last move?

There followed 16...♖xd5 17 ♗xf6 (with the threat of ♗xh7+ winning) 17...♗b7! protecting the queen and threatening mate – White lost a piece and resigned. This is also a basic exercise, to increase the depth at which one can bring the position into focus.

**G. Gaertner – H. Wohlfahrt***Prague 1994*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6  
 5 h3 0-0 6 ♗e3 ♖a6 7 ♗d3 e5 8 d5  
 ♖h5 9 ♖ge2 f5 10 exf5 gxf5 11 g4 e4  
 12 gxh5 exd3 13 ♖xd3 f4 14 ♗d4  
 ♖b4 15 ♖d2 ♗xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♖f6 17  
 0-0-0 ♗d7 18 ♖e4 ♖e5

What happened now? (Don't look; you're supposed to be blindfolded!)

This is an interesting test of strategic elements. It is often quite difficult to remember the pawn structure, which is essential to see the solution. There followed simply 19 ♖xb4 ♖xe4 20 ♖he1 and the black queen is trapped – did you see the g-file was open? If not (and many have trouble precisely with this aspect of position reconstruction), practice the conscious resetting of your mental board at those points in the game where the pawn structure changes.

If you find yourself being discouraged by some of these exercises, recall

the following cheering thought: the mistakes we're looking at here were perpetrated by players with their eyes wide open.

Finally, one can move on to longer games, with questions at various points to test how clearly the student is viewing the position. When working alone, simply try to understand the game you are playing through. There should be no shortage of questions that occur to you.

I hope that these examples have provided food for thought on how to test and strengthen different calculation 'muscles'.

### **A Swedish technique**

There is another interesting exercise that can act as a kind of intermediate training method, as well as helping one to diagnose particular problems of visualization. Swedish GM Harry Schüssler used it in a training camp for Norwegian juniors where I was his assistant, and Harry told me that it was a popular method in Sweden.

Here blindfold games, usually rapid, are played with half a set. The first game is played only with the pawns, and the second with just the other pieces. Reactions to this are mixed, and I have not yet been able to detect any distinct pattern. Some players find the first method more difficult, others the second. My impression is that players are more used to reckoning with the pieces being in motion, and often lose track of small changes in pawn structure. However, as the games

go on, this tends to be balanced by the fact that it is easier to keep track of that which changes less (pawn structure). This exercise does have the benefit of emphasizing these distinctly different problems in memory/visualization, and so one can use it to note if there is some particularly troubling aspect – say that pawn structures tend to revert to their original form – and working to correct it. Give it a try to see what you think.

### **Afterthoughts and Alfred Binet**

*"... the game begins. Let us suppose that it is I who make the first move. I see it immediately executed upon the board, which is distinctly present to my mind; ... The opponent on his side replies, and modifies anew the image, of which, in consequence, I retain the new form, as the photographic plate receives the impression of the object on which the light falls." – Siegbert Tarrasch, writing to Alfred Binet about blindfold chess*

There was a very interesting discussion on the Internet (Usenet newsgroup rec.games.chess.misc) about the mechanics of playing blindfold chess while I was in the final stages of this book. One recurring thread argued that having a clear visual image of the board was not necessary to play blindfold. More important was to have a strong familiarity with the board, the ability to know where the pieces were and where they could go. The analogy of not needing to memorize a city map

to find one's way around effectively was used.

This reminded me of the old discussion regarding Alfred Binet's investigation (which was conducted at the turn of the previous century<sup>1</sup> of blindfold chess. I quote from David Norwood's writings on Chess and Education, where this topic resurfaced fairly recently:

"He (*Alfred Binet*) investigated the phenomenon, thinking that the skill of playing blindfold chess would require strong powers of memory and of visualization. He found however, that this was not the case. Particularly in the matter of visualization, his assumptions were blatantly wrong. It was not that the expert blindfold player could visualize a chessboard better than the amateur; quite the opposite. The fact was that the good blindfold player could play so well without a board precisely because he was not so dependent on the visual aspect of the game. It was the amateur who, playing blindfold, found himself compelled to try to picture the whole board, with its sixty-four squares and the pieces on their individual squares. The strong player, on the other hand, seemed to have a far more efficient way of storing the position in his mind."

This interpretation of Binet coincides nicely with the argument that one plays blindfold not so much by seeing the board clearly, but by being able to maintain a clear sense of

knowing one's way around. Since there are many who subscribe to this idea, and who use it to describe their own ability to play blindfold, I hesitate to criticize it. There is clearly a great deal of truth in it, and for some people it is apt.

I think that in fact two slightly different phenomena are being discussed here. Much of the confusion or controversy also arises because of vagueness of terms as well. Perhaps most critical is to define 'visualize' properly, which I will discuss below. Also, Binet was discussing almost exclusively blindfold simultaneous games, which demand a different type of mental exertion. It becomes quite clear from a closer reading of relevant studies that memory is in fact a very important factor, as is visualization (in some sense of the word).

Returning to the Norwood quotation, the conclusion bothered me because it in no way corresponded to the natural way I was once able to visualize the game. There was for me (and for many others) simply no conceptual difference between seeing the board and visualizing the board. If one can reach or approach this kind of clarity, I think it must be desirable.

Also, it seems to me that Binet approaches the problem with insufficient chess experience of his own (not a novel criticism – although it hardly hindered him from doing some brilliant work).

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1 For the curious: *Psychologie des grands calculateurs et joueurs d'échecs*, Binet, A. Paris: Hachette, 1894.

The mechanics of calculation that spring forth from a visualized position are related to the mechanics of playing blindfold chess, but are not necessarily the same. Too much emphasis has been placed on evidence gleaned in connection with simultaneous blindfold exhibitions, which are quite foreign from the practical blindfold tasks we face in the normal game.

While the quest for absolute clarity of the entire board can indeed often be a waste of time, I cannot credit the argument that the strong player's ability to see the board clearly is not a factor. Less experienced players fail in visualization tasks precisely because at some point, often all too quickly, they simply cannot see the board (or locate the pieces) at all any longer.

### Visualization versus Calculation

While there is little doubt that one calculates variations in a piecemeal fashion – by concentrating on certain sectors of the board, and certain directions of 'flow', or piece traffic – the ability to clarify the image of the position is vital to proper calculation. (It is also precisely the habit of calculating in concentrated sectors that leads to oversights and omissions – see the catalogue of hallucinations discussed by Krogus and Ilyin-Zhenevsky in Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice.) This kind of thinking is natural and probably most efficient, but I do not believe it is a compelling argument to reject aiming at a clear image of the board.

Taking a closer look at some of Binet's examples, one finds that his conclusion is based more on how players visualize *variations*. When they do this, they supply diagrams that involve geometric movements of the pieces involved, and ignore sectors of the board which are not involved in the action. It seems to me that Binet may have confused the dynamics involved in *calculation*, and the purely visual (mental image) aspect that also takes place in this process. This is not surprising, since calculation is also a blindfold activity.

Binet found that strong players do not calculate by visualizing the entire board every move, and was surprised by this. This has been taken to mean that one should not or need not visualize the entire board. What I think it means is that it is often, perhaps usually, not necessary to do so, but *the clearer the image from which one starts, the more efficiently one will calculate*, whether one is calculating some number of moves ahead, or playing an entire game without sight of the board. No matter what kind of *calculation* one is doing, there is always a narrowing of focus – one does not bear all squares in mind at all times. Please note again that *calculation and visualization are very separate things*.

### Define visualization please

One thing which struck me as a potential cause of the controversy mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was the ways in which the term visualize

can be interpreted. How great this potential for confusion was did *not* strike me until I was reading more and more about Binet's work, in an attempt to find out how heretical my opinions were. In an article by Rev. C. E. Ranken (*British Chess Magazine*, September 1893), Binet's long article in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, which preceded his book, is summarized.

Binet divides the testimony he has received about the how the board is visualized into three categories. In the first, the visualization is extremely literal, with the colours of the squares, the shapes of the pieces, sometimes even "the particular board and pieces they are accustomed to use" are mentioned. The second group is also visual, but much less so. Here the squares are slightly different shades of grey and the pieces are determined more by their size than by their shape. The third category is the most symbolic. Colour and shape disappear and the pieces are identified by a kind of inherent knowledge of which are one's own. The pieces are perceived by their action, how they move.

The conclusion is that the final group is the most efficient, though there is considerable overlap in testimony. The 'clarity' school confess that they often think of the pieces abstractly as well, while the 'symbolists' admit to a kind of visualization of the board, and here again there is a repeated use of the street map type of analogy mentioned before.

I began to wonder if some of those with whom I had discussed diagram

projection and blindfold work had balked because of some unpleasant experience in this respect. Perhaps they had religiously tried to conjure up the board, complete down to the grain of the wood in the set. And repeated this every half move.

What is important to remember is that there is a wide variety of ways in which the board may be visualized. Personally, I believe that I have always seen the board more as a living diagram. I am currently in group two, though in my youth I was in group one in terms of vivid imagery. My other reaction is that group three sounds more like what happens when I begin to calculate. I hope this may be of use in helping you to determine what kind of imagery you may find comfortable.

I believe that as the calculation process begins, the board does (or should?) become much more abstract in mind, and lines of force and movement dominate. This does not rule out the need to have a clear focus at some point, preferably when one desires it. How 'literal' or concrete this visual image is depends on individual taste. What is vital is that the image communicates to the player an efficient representation of the chessboard and its possibilities.

### Reconstruction

*"... the image of the board with its pieces is not present in the memory of the player as it is in a mirror, but at every moment it demands of the player an effort of reconstruction."* – Binet,

(translation from A. de Groot's *Thought and Choice in Chess*, Mouton 1965)

This term comes up quite often in Binet's work and subsequent discussions of it. In fact, I would argue that it is this factor which I am ranting about. Although the task of the subjects in Binet's study were doing something different – trying to retrieve the correct current position from one of a series of blindfold games – the process is similar to that of recalling a key position from which one is calculating several deeper variations. Binet found that the players studied used the memory of the game continuations (which had been called out to them verbally, move by move as the games progressed) to help reset the position, and restore vital details.

In practical play this is clearly unnecessary since we can see the current position. However, the act of recurrent reconstruction is very relevant, as it takes place during any complex calculation. I would argue that the diagram projection technique is in fact a conscious effort to develop this essential skill.

Another aspect of this finding which intrigues me is the verbal aspect of it. The majority of Binet's subjects related that they would quickly recite the preceding moves to bring the game into focus. I wonder if this is not an analogy of something which I have been advocating at various points in this book – the importance of an internal dialogue when analysing a position. Here there is nearly a reversal of

roles. Normally the practice of processing information in a verbal, abstract style complements the hard facts of calculatory findings. For those trying to regain their bearings in a blindfold simul, the verbal input provided the concrete facts which allowed them to begin the abstract process of visualization.

It also suggests that no matter how abstract the perception of the board, it is still a visual process. *Seeing* a copy of the game score is a terrible distraction to the visualization process, but hearing the moves tends to be a comfortable aid.

## Experience

One of Binet's essential factors for successful blindfold play (besides imagination and memory) was chess experience (*"l'érudition"*). It must be beyond dispute that as your catalogue of typical positions and structures increases, so does your familiarity with the board's geography. This also applies to calculating ability. So, you should not despair if at times the whole chore seems too difficult. Things should improve with time. Of course, this does not mean that things will improve by themselves.

## Photographs and movies

What I have tried to do in this chapter is to guide you in developing the ability to summon up a desired position as clearly as the one on the board in front of you. We may not look at the entire

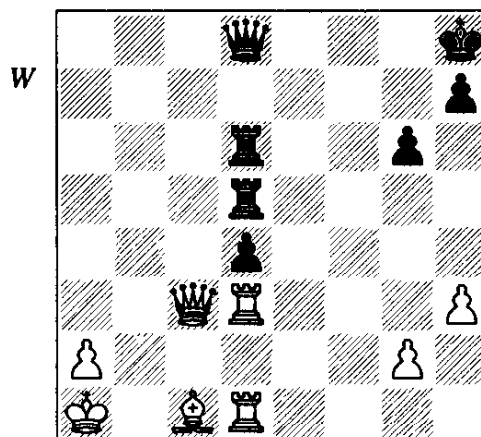


board even when we have it in front of us, but if we could see the entire position at the end of a long line clearly, we could concentrate on those aspects of it we wished, just as we do when we start on move one of a line.

I propose, in essence, this argument: that the mental *visualization* of the relevant position is a static event, much like Tarrasch's analogy of the photographic process. *Calculation* also takes place in the dark, but is dynamic and more complex. The temptation is to see *this* process as a motion picture, which achieves its effect through multiple frames per second, with none of the individual frames being perceived independently. I like this comparison very much, and perhaps it can be useful in the future for examining precisely how calculations are done.

It is worth considering one example of Binet's to show the difference between calculation and visualization. This example demonstrates how a sequence of moves occurs in a rapid sequence that is not precisely visualized. The result of this sequence can, and I think should, be brought into precise focus.

In this position Binet presents a hand-drawn diagram of how the white player (S. Sittenfeld) expressed his examination of the decisive combination: 1 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 2 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 3



Binet, 1894

♖xd4+ ♗xd4+ 4 ♖b2 ♗g7 5 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 6 a4 1-0.

The conceptual diagram shows lines drawn through the d-file and long (a1-h8) diagonal. There are no colours represented on the board, and in fact only fuzzy squares where either there are pieces, or where squares are involved in the calculation. White has then numbered the squares from a4 to a8 and f8 to h8 to ensure that the a-pawn promotes before the black king can reach a8.

This is very interesting. There is little doubt in my mind that the alignment of forces on the d-file and long diagonal prompt the above calculation. Not only that, but there is a natural inclination to examine *any* forcing sequence of captures<sup>1</sup>, so there is a combination of influences at work here.

I would argue that the most efficient way of visualizing the above

1 I am tempted to conclude that this is virtually the primary instinct in a player's development. Watching my five-year-old son, who only knows the moves and scorns plans or principles, reveals a fascination only with sequences of captures, and in extending the depth to which he can reckon these sequences.

sequence is ‘looking’ at the sequence which takes place on a very narrow field of the board. I would ‘redraw’ the board in the mind’s eye after White’s fourth move (we have after all just sacrificed a queen and extra care is probably advisable), and again after White’s sixth. Having done this final visualization, it is enough to ‘insert a graphic’ – a line from a4 to e8 – to ensure that Black’s king is outside of ‘the square’ of the pawn’s promotion. This is easily done if one is accustomed to visualizing the board, and one is familiar with where the colours of the board lie, even if one’s mental picture is not in high black-and-white contrast. (One well-known exercise in this respect is having a square called out and replying instantly what colour it is.)

My guess is that the lower right-hand corner of the board remains dim or blank even in the visualization stage, since we know it is irrelevant. This shows that some combination of the techniques (concrete and abstract visualization) can occur. If that calculation happened to be a strain for you, it is also clear that it is essential to be able to illuminate (the critical sectors of) the board by creating stepping-stone positions.

In conclusion, if you try the various exercises suggested in this chapter, I think you will notice both effects: that moves and possibilities can suggest themselves from the periphery of one’s ‘vision’, and that being able to pull the entire position suddenly into greater focus. I believe that these will be useful and natural developments.

## **Chapter Summary**

**Visualization:** Exercise your ability to visualize a position by bringing it into clear focus. Do this whenever you begin to lose the contours of the position you are trying to calculate. Concentrate on resetting those pieces that have moved since the original position. Take particular care with the pawn structure – this often remains fixed in the mind’s eye.

**Preparing for Calculation:** Certain moments of variations suggest themselves as places to concentrate one’s focus. Positions just before a major branch help one to extend the depth of a calculation, and can be used as a home base when returning to investigate the next line. Another key type of position occurs at the end of a calculation, at which one may wish to have a more detached ‘look’, prior to a final assessment. See also Chapter 1, The Fabled Tree of Analysis.

*Visualization and calculation are separate processes*, which are related by the fact that they take place in the mind’s eye. One does *not* calculate by stopping and visualizing every new position. One calculates normally (by seeking out sequences of likely moves and replies) and uses visualization to provide stepping

stones to increase the distance travelled from the original position. Visualization is a static image, like a photograph. Calculation is dynamic, like the rapid succession of stills that make up a motion picture.

# 3 The Art of Playing Bad Positions

*Nothing succeeds like success. ("Rien ne réussit comme le succès.")* – Alexandre Dumas

Here I would like to take a look at a relatively unexplored topic, the art of playing (and succeeding in) bad, perhaps terrible, positions. I can think of several reasons why this topic has evaded popular scrutiny. For one thing, it is hard enough to organize constructive ways to study ‘proper’ chess. Studying positions where one side may be objectively lost is even more vexing. How to formulate guidelines, how to assimilate this information without simply concluding that with a little extra brain power from the swindled party such examples would have been consigned to some scrap heap?

Another problem is that what worked in one specific example might have failed miserably against another opponent – or even the same opponent on a different day. Nevertheless, we can try to find some common themes in these ‘lucky’ escapes. When one stops to think about it, the phenomenon of the ‘unjust’ result is one of the commonest occurrences. The heartfelt wail of “I was *winning*” is universally known. The proverbial nugget that nothing is harder to win than a won position strikes a sympathetic chord, even though nothing could be farther from the truth.

In fact, an examination of the handling of bad positions should be one of the cornerstones of effective technique. We will, sadly, need to know how to do it often enough. Above all, we need to learn how to stop others from doing it successfully. The lucid realization of advantages so beautifully demonstrated by the Karpovs and Capablancas of the chess pantheon teach us a great deal, but in our own struggles, the messier task of dispatching a wounded adversary is often more useful.

To begin, I will propose a few guidelines for the treatment of ‘diseased’ positions. You may be able to add to the list. We should take these, like all rules, with a grain of salt. Advanced cases of positional decay may require a more drastic prescription.

**1. Keep fighting.** Chess is not an easy game, as Miguel Najdorf claimed his grandmother always told him. The longer and more often your opponent has to find strong moves, the greater the chances that his or her human frailty will come to your aid. There is almost always an opportunity to claw your way back into a game.

**2. Create problems for your opponent.** Identify the strong points of

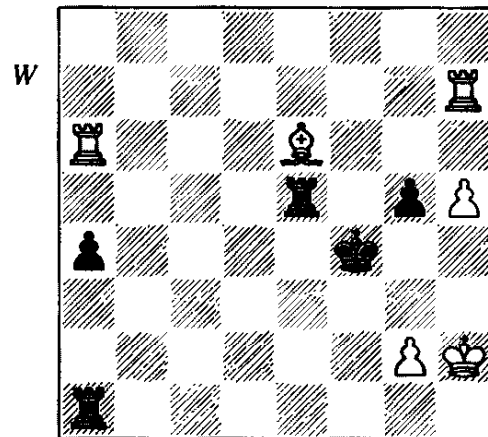
your position, and try to find a way to use them. Aim above all to gain activity, and to centralize your forces. It is absolutely amazing how much resistance can be mustered just based on these two simple strategic elements.

**3. Seek the initiative, even at the cost of material.** The turning point in a game often comes when the player with an advantage must pull back and defend. When you are in difficulties, the spectre of defeat should also provide some psychological liberation. The pressure on you lessens while your opponent has more and more to lose. Whatever problems you can pose can only unsettle the enemy.

**4. Prolong resistance.** Do-or-die gambles and cheap tricks are only advisable when one's position is more or less resignable. In most cases such violent thrashings will only make things worse and hasten defeat. Especially in calmer games there is more to be gained by patient and gradual improvement of the position. Complications *do* tend to improve the chances of the inferior side, but *only if they are based on the positive aspects of one's position* (assuming there are some!), and not some prayer-winged shot in the dark. In a nutshell: *don't make your position worse*. I well remember the first times I began to regularly encounter players of a certain class. If you hit them, you could hurt them, but they didn't just fold up and fall down. You had to keep at them. Players below this level would get rattled, make additional errors, panic. The ability to limit damage and cold-bloodedly make

the most of what one has left can be extremely discouraging for the opponent.

**5. Use your imagination.** As a game heads towards its apparently inevitable conclusion, even the most seasoned competitor has a hard time maintaining concentration. A watchful and inventive eye for a last tactical finesse can give surprising benefits. Here is a gruesome example:



**J. Donner – E. Spanjaard**  
*Leeuwarden 1961*

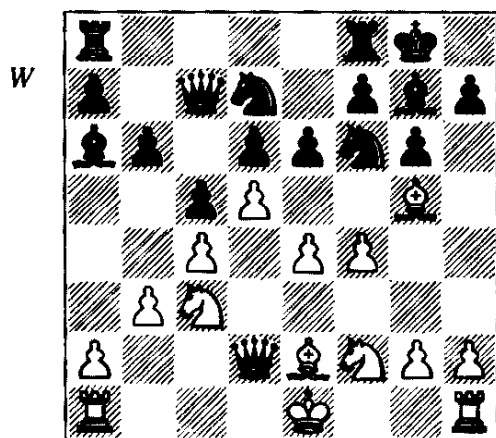
**1 ♖ha7?? ♜h1+ 2 ♔xh1 ♚g3 0-1**

Sends shivers down the spine, doesn't it? This illustrates the real golden rule of technique far better than some delicate example of end-game wizardry: *Never* relax.

Now on to a more practical example, the gradual fight-back from the edge of darkness. I will try to keep our guidelines in mind, and see how useful they are. As always, try to puzzle out what lies ahead as you read, cover up the page beneath if that helps. Trying to anticipate a game under analysis is one of the best ways to improve.

It also guarantees a more active role from the reader, and a more inquisitive mind (why on Earth didn't he play ...?).

Now feast your eyes on this:



**U. Kunsztowicz – R. Keene**  
*Dortmund 1973*

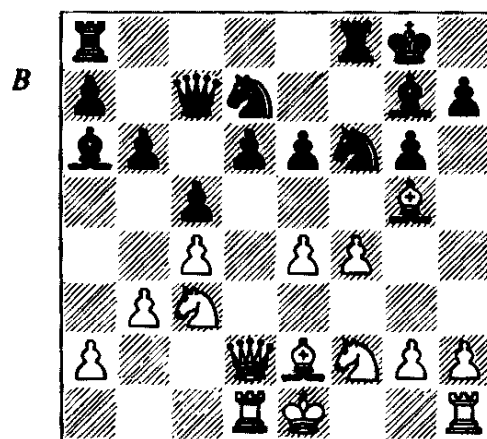
Black's provocative strategy in a hypermodern opening has resulted in problems. Even though the bishop on a6 has provoked a softening of the long dark-squared diagonal, it now sits out of play. White decides to exploit his space advantage and more harmonious development by posing a thorny question – how can Black defend his weak d-pawn?

**1 dxe6! fxe6 2 ♖d1 (D)**

Simple and direct play by White – he removes the a1-rook from a potential accident on the long diagonal and mounts nasty pressure on d6. When defending such a position the first step in the climb uphill is diagnosing the extent of the 'illness'. Here we can observe weaknesses on d6 and e6, a misplaced bishop on a6 and a lack of space. Objectively, there are many worrying symptoms.

Now we need to determine a proper course of treatment. Of course some concrete calculations will be necessary but in order to develop a potential cure we should first try to determine the healthy characteristics of Black's condition. These are: a strong bishop on g7; control over the central dark squares; and most of all a fine outpost on d4. White's f-pawn is potentially weak, and his king is still in the centre. The presence of an extra centre pawn could in the long run be an advantage for Black, but for the moment his centre is weak. With these factors in mind, Keene begins a remarkable come-back, using many of our preliminary guidelines. What do you think he should do?

*"A man surprised is half beaten"* – Gnomologia



**2...♘b8!!**

In my opinion, a brilliant move, based on concrete calculation, assessment of the position's merits, and perhaps most importantly, psychological grounds. The move looks ridiculous at first sight – in fact Keene relates that

Kunsztowicz could not suppress his laughter when he saw it.

But the move is far from silly, and its appearance only makes it more effective. The move does not change the assessment of the position, but it does begin to transform the nature of Black's disadvantage, something I will discuss later.

Now, let's examine some more conventional alternatives.

2...♘e8? is the most obvious move, but a detached examination reveals that it will not help us: 3 ♖g4! and the weakness at e6 is fatal: 3...e5 4 ♗d5+ ♕h8 5 ♗xa8 ♘ef6 6 ♘d5!. A further search could lead us to 2...♞f7!?, which falls under the heading of protracted, passive defence. Its main merit is that it indirectly defends the d6-pawn:

a) 3 ♗xd6 ♗xd6! (but not the clever 3...♘d5? 4 ♘xd5! ♗xd6 5 ♘f6+) 4 ♞xd6 ♘e8 5 ♞d3 h6 6 ♖h4 ♞xf4 and Black is doing fine. Variations like this should reinforce the observation that f4 is a potential target, and allow us a little flexibility in our search. We now see that we have a *little* time before the weakness of d6 is fatal.

b) 3 0-0! is a sensible reaction. Black can continue 3...♘f8 4 ♘g4 (or 4 f5!?) and while immediate catastrophe has been averted, we have not done much to create counterchances. This is a tough call – we would like to find something more testing, but there are arguments for trying to sit tight.

*"If we do not succeed, then we run the risk of failure."* – Former US Vice-president Danforth Quayle

As mentioned before, it is impossible to be sure, since in bad positions a defence needs to succeed before we can assess it. Keene's continuation has the merit of actively creating problems to solve, but if his opponent had refuted it, armchair annotators would sagely recommend 2...♞f7. If he had played *that* and been squashed like a bug ... you get the idea.

After 2...h6 3 ♖h4, 3...g5!? is a spirited reaction that usually finds a few takers, but I think this should fall under the heading of premature panic. It does have the merits of trying to change the course of the game and introducing an element of chaos, but it is not easy to see any concrete compensation for the pawn. Instead, 3...♘e8 (other knight moves allow ♖e7) 4 0-0 (4 ♖g4!) 4...♖xc3 5 ♗xc3 d5 (5...♞xf4 6 ♗g3!) is an instructively reckless continuation. Black's search for activity is evident here – the a6-bishop, f8-rook and queen on c7 have expanded their horizons – but as the position opens up (and this is clearly a factor in the way Black has sought counterplay) White's pieces, particularly the powerful bishop pair, will become ever stronger. Here Black has weakened himself because the apparent activity has *dissolved the strong points of his position* (the g7-bishop and the central dark squares) and after a brief period of aggression he should be lost.

3 ♘b5!

A strong move and a logical reaction. White allows Black to rid himself of the poorly placed a6-bishop, but

gets new assets in return. These are an outpost on c4, and the stifling of the knight on b8, which has used a great deal of time attempting to gain access to d4. On the other hand, the potential strength of Black's pawn centre has increased. It is important to list these factors, not just because it is an instructive way of thinking. The contours of the position are changing, and so may demand a new method of handling the position. Again 3 ♕xd6? is premature: 3... ♕xd6 4 ♖xd6 ♘e8 5 ♖d3 h6 (or even 5... ♘c6!?).

3... ♘xb5 4 cxb5 ♘e8

4...d5 was a logical consideration, trying to exploit Black's improved central presence. However, if White refrains from closing the position, the clash of pawns increases the likelihood of White's bishop pair becoming even stronger. My guess is that Keene mistrusted 5 ♖f3! for Black. Instead of allowing White the opportunity to make simple and strong moves, Black consistently seeks ways of posing less conventional problems.

5 ♖c4

The obvious follow-up to his last move. Black's position now appears to be on the critical list.

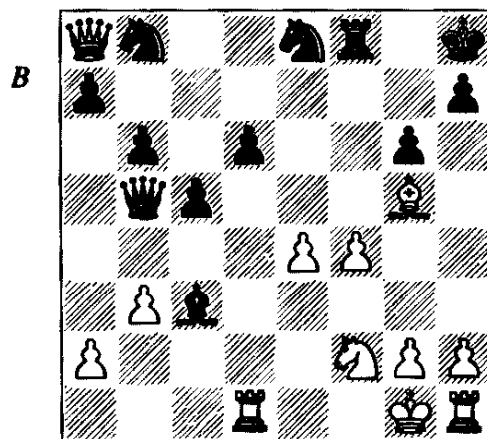
5... ♕d7!

5... ♕f7 6 ♘g4! paralyzes Black. His choice in the game also paves the way for ... ♖d4 and ...d5, but with the queen on a far better square.

6 ♘g4

White seeks an active form of punishment. He foregoes the greedy 6 ♖d5?! exd5 7 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 8 ♕xa8 ♖c3+ 9 ♔f1 ♕xb5+ 10 ♔g1 (D),

when Keene gives the following attractive sample variation:



10... ♘c6 (10... ♘c7!?) 11 ♖h6? (11 a4 ♕e2 12 ♕xc6 ♖d4 13 ♖f1 ♖xf2+ 14 ♖xf2 ♕e1+ 15 ♖f1 ♕e3+ with perpetual check) 11... ♘d4 12 ♖xf8 (12 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 13 ♖xf8 ♕e2 wins for Black) 12... ♘e2+ 13 ♔f1 ♘g3+ 14 ♔g1 ♕f1+ 15 ♖xf1 ♘e2#.

These variations are not exhaustive but illustrate Black's compensation very well. The whole game stresses the priority given to initiative over material by both players. This is obviously a suspect line for White – both members of his royal family are terribly misplaced and Black develops a dangerous attack. By definition this implies a mishandling of the advantage.

6... ♖d4!

Black centralizes his best piece and emphasizes his domination of the central dark squares. The bishop also screens the weak d-pawn, which allows his centre to grow in strength. The advance ...d6-d5 now hangs in the air.

7 h4 ♘g7

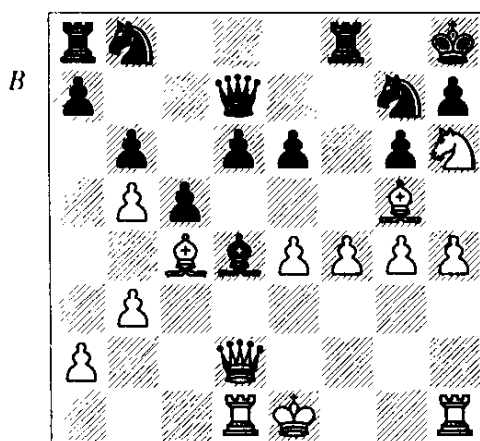


A smooth regrouping which guards his other soft central pawn and hinders the attacking advance h4-h5.

8 ♖h6+?

White gets carried away by the aggressive appearance of his position and banks on a mating attack. In fact, this divides and decentralizes his forces. Better was 8 e5! d5! 9 ♖f6+ ♜xf6 10 exf6 ♖h5 11 ♙e2 ♖xf6!? (Keene feared the consequences of the cruder 11...♖g3 12 ♜h3 ♙f2+ 13 ♙xf2 ♖e4+ 14 ♙g1 ♖xd2 15 ♜xd2 with a powerful attack for White; he is ready to crack open the kingside – another good example of initiative outweighing material considerations) 12 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 13 h5 ♜g7 14 ♜h3 ♖d7 and Black has completed his development and has a pawn and secure central control for the sacrificed exchange. Keene considered this fully satisfactory for him, but White should have settled for this since he no longer has a secure grip on the position.

8...♙h8 9 g4 (D)



9...a6!

This aggressively liberates Black's queenside and he now takes charge of

the game. Note that by delaying the advance ...d6-d5 Black has kept his position stable and increased his options. Now both potential breaks (...b6-b5 and ...d6-d5) may come with gain of tempo.

10 ♜e2?!

10 a4 is probably slightly more accurate.

10...axb5 11 ♙xb5 ♜a7 12 a4 ♖a6 13 ♙f1 ♜b7!

Another precise move – from here the queen monitors b5 and d5 as well as hindering White's king from scurrying to relative safety on g2.

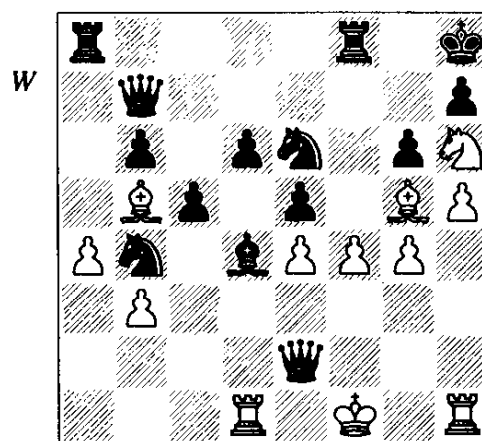
14 ♙d3? ♖b4 15 ♙b5

White now notices that ...♖xd3 followed by ...b5 was a threat. This staggering back and forth clearly indicates punch-drunkenness.

15...e5!

An unexpected break, but White cannot reply 16 f5 because his e-pawn is pinned, another benefit of Black's 13th move.

16 h5 ♖e6! (D)



A graphic illustration of the transformation wrought by Black's dynamic and cunning play. White has

only succeeded in scattering his troops and exposing his own king with his over-optimistic play. Nevertheless, Black's move had to be very precisely calculated.

**17 ♖g2?!**

17 hxg6 was the last chance to test his adversary:

a) 17...♗xf4? 18 ♗f7+! ♖xf7 19 gxf7 ♗xf7 (19...♗xe2?? 20 ♔f6#) 20 ♗f3 allows White to fight on.

b) Keene planned 17...♗xg5! 18 ♗f5 ♖xf5! (not 18...♗xe4? 19 ♗xe4! {19 ♖xh7+ ♗xh7 20 gxh7 ♖xf5 --+} 19...♗xe4 20 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 21 ♗e7#) 19 gxf5 ♗xe4 20 ♖xh7+ (20 ♗g2 ♗g3+!; 20 ♖h3 ♗g3+!) 20...♗xh7 21 gxh7 ♗g3+ and Black wins.

Note how White sinks like a stone in this game, absolutely unable to notice the turning point. This is a useful psychological observation and a common occurrence when encountering surprisingly stiff resistance.

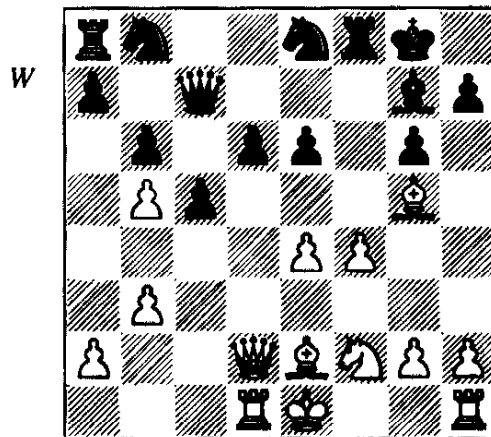
**17...♗xg5 18 ♖xd4 exf4!**

Black finishes with merciless efficiency once he takes control. Now White must part with a whole rook, and resigned, doubtless in shock and disbelief.

### 0-1

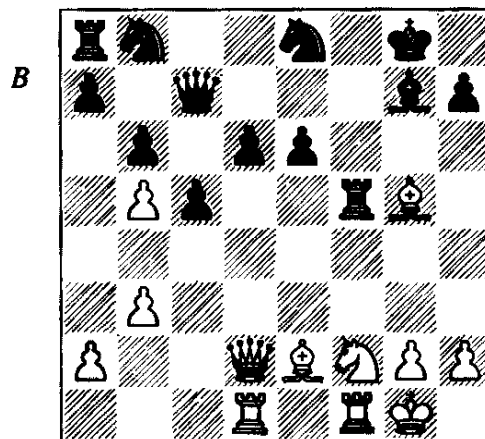
Perhaps you are thinking what many of my students do when presented with this game – maybe the white position wasn't so good after all? Let's return to the position after Black's fourth move (see next diagram).

Here I propose that White go for the jugular with **5 f5!** (5 ♔g4!? is also dangerous – it too presses e6 while



**U. Kunsztowicz – R. Keene**  
(position after 4...♗e8)  
*Dortmund 1973*

controlling the key f5-square) **5...gxf5**  
**6 exf5 ♖xf5 7 0-0 (D).**



I believe this continuation casts serious doubts on Black's position. He is almost certain to be slaughtered in his bed. The sudden shift to an open, violent tempo highlights both White's ability to exploit lines and diagonals, and the negative development implemented by the extravagant manoeuvre to b8 with the knight. If one sees this position outside the context of the first diagram, the impression is that Black has been aimlessly wasting time

and is on the brink of disaster. Yet, for some reason, this continuation is very easy to miss when playing through the game.

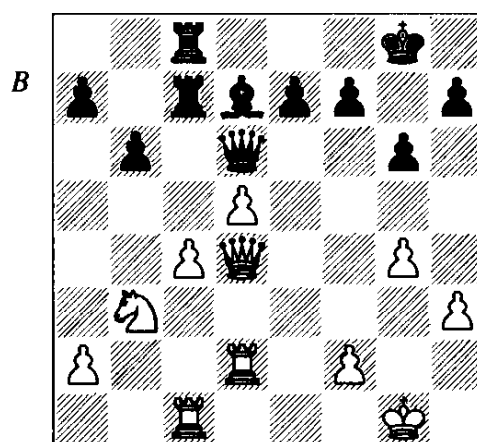
There are several reasons for this. Firstly, there is a natural tendency not to rush what appears to be a safe and lasting advantage, and a reluctance to part with material when securely better. Secondly, White's creation of an outpost on c4 made it nearly irresistible to place his bishop there.

In fact, Keene's inventive defensive idea radically changed the nature of his disadvantage. Prime factors of his inferiority after 2...♘b8 were a lack of development and an inability to cope with White's bishop pair in an open position. White's natural tendency to play obvious moves did not go below the surface appearances, and neglected the real issues of the position. This shows that we often think of an *obvious* move as a natural one, when in fact we should be looking for a *logical* move, which need not be obvious at all.

I think that this game could hardly be better suited to demonstrate our topic. It is a marvellous sustained example of how initiative can outweigh material values. It also shows how the underlying nature of a position can change very quickly, and that we should constantly reassess the elements that comprise the position at hand. Finally, Keene's success was due both to his inventiveness, and his ability to change subtly the nature of the position.

Now I would like to examine an example from my own experience, which

should help convey more of the psychology behind the scenes. I should perhaps warn the reader in advance that what you are about to see is really quite a bad game. A terrible game. But then again, that is part of the point. I hope in this way to demonstrate just how important psychological factors are in fighting back from bad positions. In practical play subjective evaluations become more important as one's position becomes objectively worse!



**J. Tisdall – J. Johansson**  
*Malmö 1987/8*

White encounters a long and unpleasant defence after some feeble play in the middlegame. The game was adjourned, with White having sealed ♖b2-d4. Normally I would put a lot of serious work into an adjourned game, but this did not happen here for several reasons. Firstly, I felt that this was really the kind of position that just had to be played, since the game has in many ways just begun. The other reason was less professional, but understandable – the game was adjourned on New Year's Eve...

After a quick check to see that I was not losing my c-pawn by force, I decided to be practical and just fight it out at the board. Let's diagnose the white position. White's c-pawn is under fierce assault and his kingside is weak and exposed – it is hard to imagine what possessed White to play g4. Finally, the knight sits passively out of play on b3. One has to be a bit optimistic to find assets. There is a certain amount of spatial advantage, a possible counter-weakness on e7 and a strong d-pawn. If the knight could be brought into play, the weakened dark squares around Black's king could be an encouraging factor. Upon resumption, it quickly became clear that Black had analysed the position more deeply.

1...♖b4 2 ♜dc2 e6!?

A surprise giving White a difficult decision as early as move two. As I was to discover, my opponent consistently opted for the sharpest, most ambitious, continuation. His motivation here is quite clear. He wishes to exchange the potentially weak e-pawn for one of White's few trumps, the pawn on d5. This transaction will also liberate his bishop, which can add to the siege of c4 or, more alarmingly, turn up on the long diagonal leading to White's king.

The move does have its dark side, a further weakening of the dark squares on the kingside. It also allows the white d-pawn to become passed, although this will cost material. After some reflection I decided on general principles to go for the active option.

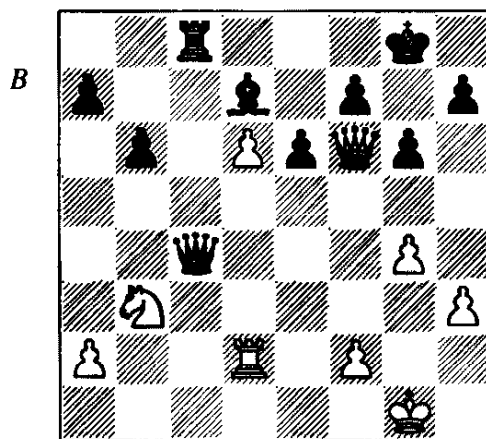
3 d6!?

The alternative 3 ♖d3 ♖d6! was not appealing but there was a temptation to try for 3 dxe6 ♙xe6 4 ♘d2 b5? 5 ♘e4 ♜xc4 6 ♘f6+ ♚h8 7 ♘h5+! ♜xd4 8 ♜xc8+ mating. Better fourth moves for Black (4...♜d7!?!; 4...♜c5) prevent any kind of aggression from being mounted. If White chooses to capture on e6 he must do so anticipating relatively passive defence. Also, in these lines White can easily be given the choice between being driven back or trading into joyless endings. The pawn sacrifice forces Black to share the workload. He is still better, but he must tread carefully.

3...♜c6 4 ♜d2

Of course White preserves the d-pawn, which limits the bishop's activity and is dangerously passed.

4...♜xc4 5 ♜xc4 ♖xc4 6 ♖f6 (D)



Now is a natural time to take stock of the changes. White has created ideas of ♜d4-f4, and can also hope to bring the knight to the kingside via d4-f3. Black does not lower his guard.

6...♖e4!

Putting your biggest piece in the middle of the board is never a bad

idea. Here it prepares both ...♙c6 and ...e5 creating the possibility of ...♚f4. The advance of the e-pawn is particularly bothersome since in conjunction with ...♜e8 Black begins to achieve total coordination of his forces.

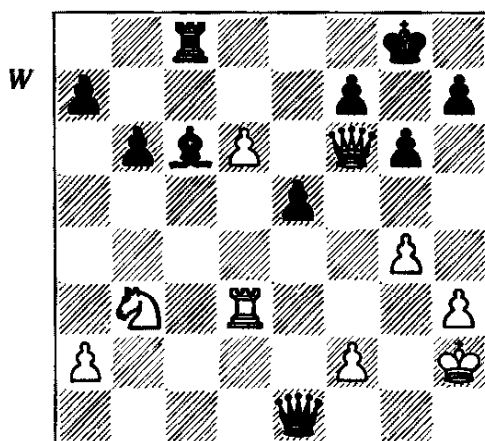
7 ♖d4 ♚e1+ 8 ♙h2 e5 9 ♜d3

White continues to put this piece in position to attack f7, where it will cover White's soft f2-pawn as well.

9...♙c6! (D)

Another nasty surprise for White – surely one of the reasons I sacrificed the c-pawn was to get a dangerous d-pawn. Black's last move shows contempt for White's pride and joy.

The tactical attempt to end the game by direct attack 9...♙f5 10 ♜f3 ♜c2? allows an immediate escape with 11 ♜xf5 gxf5 12 ♚g5+ and draw by perpetual. Now I had to come to terms with the facts – my d-pawn was overrated and my king was in big trouble. I now found the right way to organize resistance, but chose a very odd way to implement it.



10 d7?

White had become depressed by lines like 10 ♙g3!? ♚e4 11 ♜d2 h6

and the option of a timely ...♚f4(+) severely hampers White's ability to generate counterplay. The combination of Black's extremely useful e5-pawn, and his disdain for my d-pawn somehow led me to conclude that it was essential to engineer the removal of the e5 thorn. But having understood that my king should rush to h4, this should have been done at once, since this is the most important factor here. In the line above, 11 ♜e3!? ♚g2+ 12 ♙h4 h6 13 ♜d2 leads to a much more obscure position than the game. I have explained why I arrived at the move played in the game, though that hardly excuses how White could really be convinced that the d-pawn should be sold so cheaply. I must have been so surprised that my d-pawn was less dangerous than I imagined, that I became convinced it was almost worthless. Panicky thinking.

10...♚h1+ 11 ♙g3 ♙xd7! 12 ♙h4

12 ♜xd7 ♜c3+ 13 f3 ♚e1+ 14 ♙g2 ♜c2+ leads to an easily won ending for Black. White's king is now on its best possible square (!) and the psychological pressure begins to mount on Black, who is now nearing the full point.

White has unfortunately made matters worse by the ill-advised pawn exchange, but at least begins offering maximum resistance from this point. Now it becomes very important to anticipate Black's most tempting lines and try to foil them. This, combined with White's king position, will both incite and frustrate the opponent.

12...h6 13 ♚xe5

13 ♖xd7 g5+ 14 ♔g3 ♖c3+ would still be a win for Black.

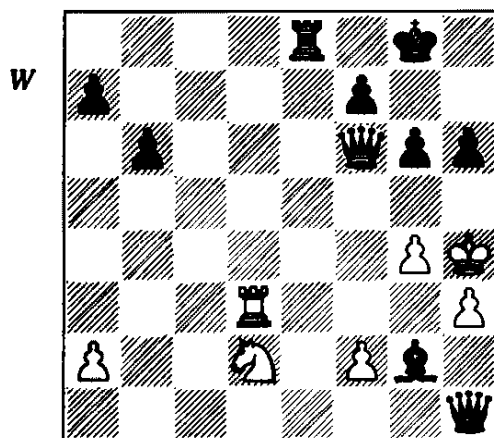
13...♗c6

An interesting psychological moment. White is lost, and the simplest method for Black is probably to return his queen to the centre and try to switch to technical mode. But the strange white king proves to be an irresistible target, and a surprisingly elusive one.

14 ♘d2

White treads water for the moment. The knight creeps towards the critical sector and prevents the black queen from recentralizing.

14...♖e8 15 ♕f6 ♗g2 (D)



Here the second time control was reached.

16 ♖c3!

White must still wait. Black wishes to create the threat of playing ...g5+ followed by ...♗xh3, and to defend against this White's rook must stay on an open file and on a dark square.

16...♖h2

16...g5+ 17 ♔h5 ♗xh3 18 ♔xh6 ♖e6?? 19 ♖c8+ prevents the threat outlined above. Now Black seems to

be winning by force since his last move also threatens to reverse the move-order, that is, now ...♗xh3! followed by ...g5+ looms.

17 ♖g3!

This continues the bizarre duel between the surrounded white king and the cornered black queen. Now Black is given a wide choice of tempting alternatives, all of which require detailed analysis. Here he used up most of his time in the third session trying to crack this nut.

17...♗d5?

White's tenacity reaps its first reward. Black now has clearly decided not to embark on any adventures, and aims to return the game to technical play. This is understandable since his advantage is safe and clear this way, but he has now lost time, both on the board (not terribly relevant here) and on the clock. Time pressure is the main ingredient in a recipe for a successful comeback. Here are the lines we examined during the game:

a) 17...g5+ is probably the first line to catch the eye. Now a natural continuation is 18 ♔h5 ♗xh3 19 ♔f3 ♗xg4+ 20 ♔xg4 ♖e4+ 21 ♔f5 ♖f4+ 22 ♔e5 ♖xf6 23 ♔xh2 ♖xf2 24 ♔g4 and surprisingly White still has excellent defensive chances thanks to his active pieces and Black's weak king-side pawns.

b) 17...♗xh3 is next on the agenda, and 18 ♔f3! is White's defensive idea. Now it is hard to believe that White can defend:

b1) 18...g5+? 19 ♔xg5 and now 19...hxg5+ 20 ♖xg5+ gives White

perpetual check. Other lines such as 19...♙xg4+? 20 ♖h3!! or 19...♙f1+! 20 ♖h3 ♕c7 21 ♖c3 give White an obvious attack.

b2) 18...♕xf2 is the most dangerous:

b21) 19 ♔xh3 ♕f1+! 20 ♖g2 ♖e2 21 ♕d8+ ♔h7 22 ♘h4 ♖e3+ 23 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 24 ♔h1 ♖h3+ 25 ♔g1 ♕c1+ is an extremely accurate sequence of checks by Black which wins by force. Both players saw this.

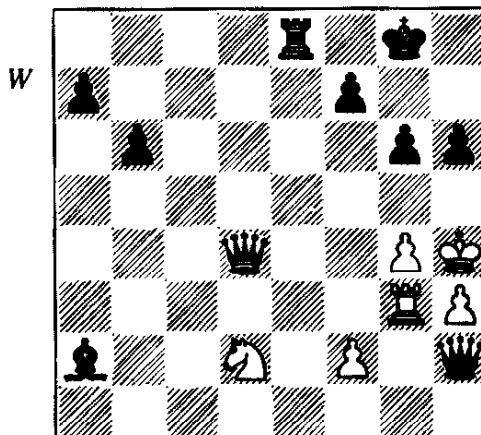
b22) However, both players also examined the alternative 19 ♕c6!? ♖e2 20 ♕c8+ ♔h7 21 ♕c4! and Black is hard-pressed to avoid a draw by repetition. After calculating all of these variations, and double-checking, Black decided the sensible thing to do now was to avoid complications and find a quiet way to net the whole point. It was only much later that I discovered that 19...♖e3! in the final variation would have given the game its logical conclusion.

Incidentally, 17...♖e6 was a sensible alternative to the complications.

Perhaps the most important thing to note now is the clear change in attitude signalled by Black's last move. He wants no more to do with tactical variations and will now actively avoid them. This, combined with impending time-trouble, could give White an opportunity, if he can dream up some kind of tactical idea.

18 ♕d4 ♙xa2?! (D)

This move must have been calculated during his last long think. He had to verify that this move did not lose to some idea involving ♕a4 by White.



The move once again reveals his desire for a technical solution to the struggle. Black prepares to surrender the exchange on e4. Where this to occur, he would snap up the f-pawn and with three pawns for the exchange and White's absurd king position, the win would be in the bag.

19 g5!

White tries to open up an attacking route for his king. There was no future in trying to pocket some material compensation for his woes: 19 ♕a4 ♖e2 20 ♕xa2 ♕xf2, 19 ♘e4 ♖xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♕xf2, and 19 ♘f3 ♕h1 20 ♕a4 ♖e2 all lose without much of a struggle.

19...h5

This completely safeguards Black's king, and guarantees that the white king will not wander. However, the worsening of White's king position was part of a plan.

20 ♘e4

The only way to prolong resistance at all, it seems.

20...♖xe4+ 21 ♕xe4 ♕xf2?

21...♙e6 was worth a try, though the position is no longer as clear as it was with the white f-pawn preserved

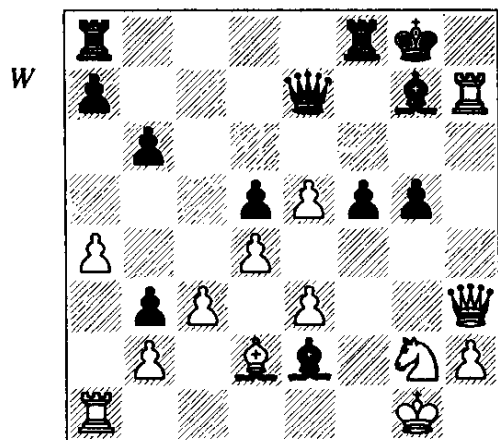
and Black's queen hemmed out of the game.

22 ♖e8+ ♔h7 23 ♖h8+! 1/2-1/2

And now a disgusted groan from my opponent. White's voluntary worsening of his king position was in fact the foundation of a stalemate. The next time someone denigrates the use of studies or problems, one could bear a finish like this in mind. Anything that can strengthen one's chess imagination can have practical benefits.

I hope that these two games have illustrated the provisional guidelines for fighting in bad positions. Perhaps they have also shed some light on how to use psychological factors during a game. Above all one must just keep fighting, and remember that there are often possibilities hidden in even the most frightful circumstances.

### The best for last?



**B. Larsen – T. van Scheltinga**  
*Beverwijk 1964*

This game appears in the classic collection *Larsen's Selected Games of Chess 1948-69*, McKay/Bell 1970.

This book is well worth searching out – it was reissued by Batsford in 1991 under the title *Bent Larsen: Master of Counterattack*. Besides being a well-annotated collection of games that are not readily available in the information age, the book also entertains. Bent Larsen writes as boldly as he plays, and he always says what he thinks, or feels. The result is illuminating, and one gets an instructive insight into a player's psychology as well as thoughts.

I happened to be re-reading Larsen as I was putting the finishing touches on this book. When I saw this example, I realized it had to be included. Larsen's assessment of the position shows that precious balance of practicality and objectivity essential to a good swindle (or fight-back). The concept behind the swindle is so breathtaking that it deserves to be better known.

Larsen relates an amusing anecdote about this game and confesses to being objectively lost at this moment. He begins by examining 28 ♖h6 and gives 28...♗f7 29 e6, with 29...♙xh6 favouring Black, and 29...♗f6! as being even stronger.

Larsen's description of his thoughts here is a brilliant example of the kind of thinking we have been discussing in this chapter, and I cannot resist quoting his reflections in full:

"Looking at such variations as these you begin to realize that something very special must be done. 28...♙g4 is a threat. Maybe, quietly sacrifice the exchange and play on.



There is a pawn for it, but it is not inviting.

“However, fantastic combinations are hidden in this position. In the middle of all the misery it must be remembered that White’s position is not hopeless. At this juncture he is a pawn up, he has strong centre pawns, and the black king is not very well protected by pawns.

“Slowly you see the counterchances – and play ...”

**28 c4!! ♖xc4?**

A serious error, which Larsen gives two question marks in his book. The reasoning behind Black’s mistake is simple to understand. White stands badly. Larsen’s last move looks desperate. Therefore he is losing, but trying to trick us. The motivation behind White’s last move is clearly to try to mobilize his centre and use the bishop aggressively on c3. In order to snuff out counterplay based on these ideas, Black allows himself to be distracted from posting his light-squared bishop on g4. Black was certainly feeling confident, and wanted to play the safest move. The bishop’s detour, he assures himself, is only temporary.

Such careful thinking often helps suppress trouble in superior positions. But there are also positions where the only sure route to victory wends along the most complicated path. Compare this with the earlier discussion of the psychology behind Kunsztowicz’s demise against Keene.

I hesitate to give Black’s move such a harsh assessment since the point of White’s idea is impressively original.

In fact, the most crucial aspect of the position turns out to be the light-squared bishop’s ability to access the kingside!

Larsen points out that Black had a reasonably convincing way to maintain his advantage, with 28...♖ac8! planning 29 cxd5 ♖c2 30 ♖c3 ♖xc3! 31 bxc3 ♖d3 and Black’s b-pawn suddenly outweighs his more impressive-looking rivals.

**29 ♜f4!!**

This move is a brutal slap in the face, which should rouse Black from his happy reveries.

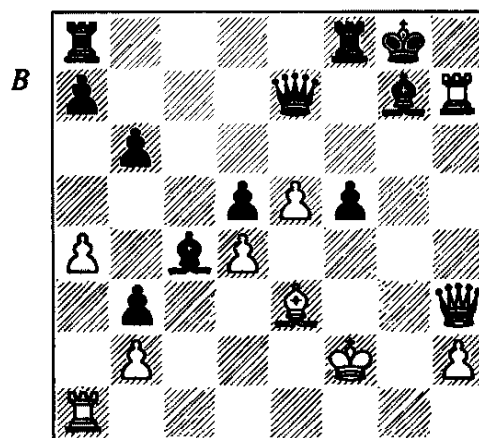
**29...gxf4**

It is hard to imagine that Black can tolerate the knight joining the attack.

**30 ♖f2!!**

And this blow more or less sends Black to dreamland. Wake up and knockout delivered in the short space of two moves.

**30...fxe3+ 31 ♖xe3 (D)**



The point is that the addition of a rook on g1 to the attack is overwhelming. White’s 30th move not only opened a route to g1, it prevented the bishop on c4 from regaining access to the critical sector.

**31...f4**

If 31...♗d3, then 32 ♗f4! locks the bishop out of the kingside.

**32 ♗d2!**

Larsen notes that this is simpler than 32 ♖g1!? ♗d3!, when Black can still put up a struggle. The sub-variations clearly and simply illustrate the chief motif of keeping Black's light-squared bishop barred from the game.

**32...♝f7?!**

32...♖g5 33 ♖g1 ♖xg1+ should lose, but it was the only chance. Note that 32...♗d3 is impossible since it is simply *en prise*. Somehow it seems unfair that White can just take on d3 and maintain contact with the h7-rook. I am sure Mr van Scheltinga felt unjustly treated.

**33 ♖h5+ ♜e6 34 ♖g4+ 1-0**

An absolutely brilliant illustration of our theme. I was rather amazed upon rediscovering this position that I did not have a clear recollection of it. I assumed that such an attractive sequence would have made an indelible impression on me. Unfortunately, I overestimated my memory, but as compensation, it was a pleasure to see this combination twice.

What I am trying to say is that this game is well worth remembering, but its originality makes it difficult to categorize and file away. If I had written it down all those years ago maybe it would be closer to my consciousness.

## Chapter summary

**Keep fighting – never relax.**

**Create problems for your opponent.** Identify your trumps and make the most of them.

**Simple things like aiming for centralization can automatically improve your position.**

**Try to seize the initiative, even if it costs some material.** Complications improve the inferior side's chances as a general rule. Keep your forces as active as possible.

**On the other side of the coin:** Though complications are undesirable when better, one should also be wary of becoming *too* conservative. One should not fear complications initiated out of the opponent's sheer desperation.

**Prolong resistance.** Don't make things worse.

**Playing for cheap, risky tricks is a last resort.** If you limit the damage and battle on, you will almost always get a chance to claw your way back into the game. If things are really beyond repair, however, you should have no qualms about playing for traps.

**Use your imagination.** There are often hidden resources, or subtleties that an overconfident opponent may miss. Keep looking. Stretch your imagination.

**Other considerations:**

**In general, the inferior side should avoid exchanges.**

**King safety is a basic element in compensation.** If your opponent has a superior position but a slightly exposed king, this will greatly hamper his ability to win. Just having a more secure king position can often provide compensation for a deficit elsewhere.

**Never look back.** It is very easy to start whipping oneself because of a mistake. Don't think back to what could have been. This is a common waste of time and vital nervous energy. Live in the present, and fight for the future.

**If you turn the tables, don't relax.** After a successful escape, both sides can be psychologically vulnerable. Relaxing too soon after a fight-back is one natural reaction. This usually results in a quick return to misery. Other common psychological pitfalls: often one's opponent cannot adjust to not being better and crashes forward to defeat. Another standard reaction is going from lost to winning but agreeing a draw from general relief. Stay calm.

## 4 Pattern Training (and other useful exercises)

*“Art is the imposing of a pattern on experience, and our aesthetic enjoyment is recognition of the pattern.”* – Alfred North Whitehead, British philosopher, *Dialogues*

In this chapter I will primarily be looking at the use of pattern training and other kinds of focused thinking in solving tactical problems. This has undeniable practical value. Working with patterns will provide a kind of ‘instant experience’ for players who may not have encountered the particular motifs before.

The actual list of common tactical themes has been consigned to an appendix, just as the mating patterns have. Players who have not had much experience or training in such matters should definitely peruse that section of the book. This can be done before we move on to the tactical section of the chapter.

There I have tried to present one, absolutely clear, illustration of each theme in the appendices. I find it is better to keep the patterns separate from the training questions, as in practical play motifs blend so intricately that one can often not categorize combinations or tactical sequences at all – at least, not in any single category, which is the ideal when classifying them.

Pattern training provides guidance and experience in strategic positions

as well. Certain plans and positional weapons can be catalogued just as efficiently as their more dramatic tactical counterparts.

Paradoxically perhaps, I will first demonstrate some useful strategic patterns. This may be of greater interest in some respects, since it has been done less often. Then we shall move on to tactical motifs, and some ways to use them to discover combinational possibilities. The exercises will also concentrate on developing a clear process of thought, which is the basic mission of this book.

### Section 1: Positional Themes

#### The Minority Attack

For some reason, the treatment of positional themes is usually a bit vague. How to use a tactical pattern is readily obvious since the positions in which they arise contain forced play. What does one do with positional themes? My advice would be: collect them – perhaps record them in a notebook. The goal is to remember them, and have them ready to surface when needed. You can trust them to your

memory (I wouldn't trust mine), but it usually pays to have some kind of written record. The simple act of recording something also often makes it more easily remembered. Also, setting verbal tags to positions continues the process, which runs throughout this book, of knitting the accessible to the abstract.

It seems to me that positional work falls into two general categories: the collection of striking strategic ideas; and the deeper understanding of common position *types*, accomplished by examining the variety of ideas that may recur within the types. Both categories may be rendered easier to remember by attaching some kind of explanatory note to the position or plan. I will try to make this clearer by giving examples.

In Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice, I have presented some examples of the first category (striking positional motifs worth remembering). For these, a 'snapshot' and a brief description of the idea behind the manoeuvre can be sufficient. Examples like setting up an impregnable king position (Spassky-Petrosian), or maintaining control of an open file by artificially closing it (Karpov-Unzicker) demonstrate this kind of collecting.

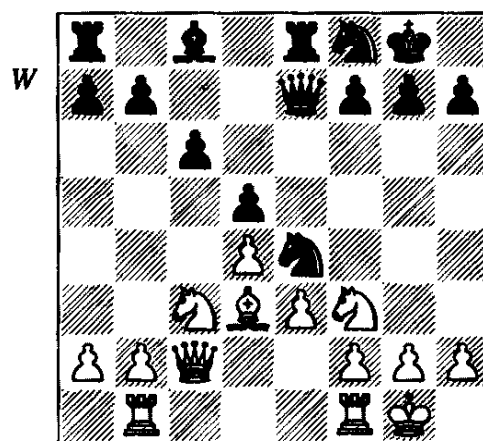
I always found this to be a natural method, because whenever I encountered such ideas, they made a literal impression somewhere in my brain, even if I was (usually) too lazy to actually record them somewhere. I regret now the exaggerated faith I had in my earlier powers of memory. The

mind's photographic plate often fades quickly. While writing this book, I have been repeatedly shocked by a sense of discovery while perusing old favourites, seeing anew things that I thought I would never forget.

An example of the other method, the investigation of a well-known type of position, and its 'sub-variations', I present now.

### A. Karpov – L. Ljubojević *Linares 1989*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♙g5 c6 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♙d3 ♙e7 8 ♚c2 0-0 9 ♘f3 ♚e8 10 0-0 ♘f8 11 ♚ab1 ♘e4 12 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 (D)



Here we have a classic picture of one of the best-known strategic themes, the minority attack. This refers to the queenside pawn structure, and the plan of the advance b4-b5.

This advance is designed to create a structural weakness in the black camp. Capturing on b5 would weaken the d5-pawn and open the b- and c-files for White. Ignoring the pawn will allow White to create a target on c6, a

backward pawn on an open file. This is a simple and effective plan.

There are a number of ways to combat this. Sometimes Black will prepare an advance ...c6-c5 in reaction, and achieve enough active play to compensate for the isolated d-pawn. Black achieves this compensation partly by the very fact that c5 comes under his control. Without this control, c5 is just another strong point for White in such positions.

Another method is to keep c6 under protection long enough to mount counterplay on the kingside. This can be done by eventually transferring a rook to the third rank, for example, via e6. Finally, there are positions where the insertion of the moves ...a6 and a4 occurs, and Black can mount counterplay by playing ...cxb5 and then utilizing his passed a-pawn.

These possibilities just go to show that a deeper examination of even the most elementary positional themes can reveal a wide range of subtleties. Since the cataloguing of strategic themes has been somewhat neglected, even in extremely popular position types, I will provide an example of each of the above methods. It is well worth creating a similar kind of scrapbook of instructive sub-themes in the positions one plays.

In the present example, we shall see a successful implementation of the minority attack strategy. One vital element of this success is that the attack takes place under rather simplified conditions. The scarcity of pieces complicates the defender's task, since

many of his counterplans rely on the ability to generate active play.

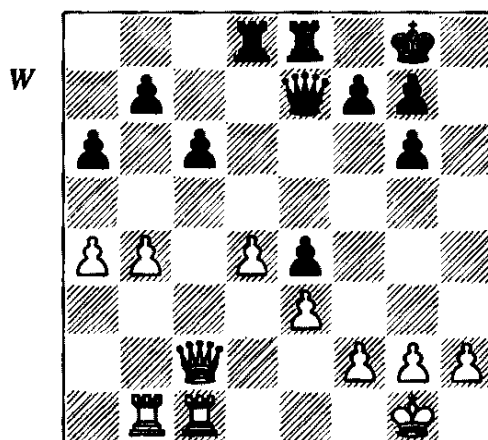
**13 b4 a6 14 a4 ♖f5 15 ♛e5 ♜ad8 16 ♜fc1 ♛g6**

This move indicates that Black aims only at neutralizing White's position. This policy risks falling just short of equality, but Ljubojević banks on being able to simplify his way out of danger.

**17 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♛xe4 dxe4?!**

18...♛xe5!? looks better, since it improves Black's pawn structure or avoids the trade of all the minor pieces.

**19 ♛xg6 hxg6 (D)**



**20 b5**

Note how Karpov waited with this thematic assault until the prospects of counterattack were reduced to an absolute minimum. Naturally, this means that his winning chances are also somewhat reduced, but the play will be all his. Coupled with the fabled Karpovian technique, this spells 'torture' in great big neon letters for Ljubojević.

**20...cxb5 21 axb5 ♜d6**

The Yugoslavian grandmaster opts for defence of a6 rather than c6. The

passed a-pawn is harmless in this position thanks to White's control of the queenside files.

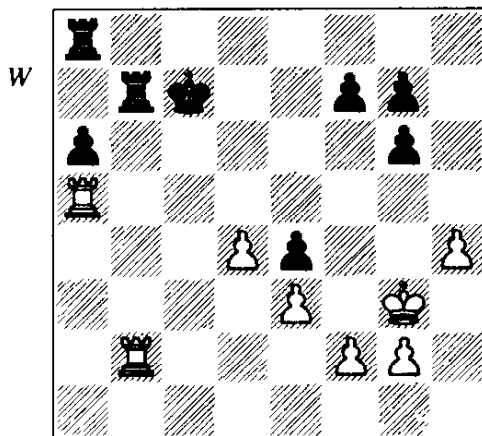
22 bxa6 bxa6 23 ♖a4 ♖d7 24 ♖xd7 ♜xd7 25 ♜c5 ♜a7 26 ♜a5 ♔f8

26...♜e6 27 ♜b8+ would prevent the black king from entering the battle sector.

27 ♜b6 ♜ea8 28 h4 ♔e7 29 ♔h2 ♔d7 30 ♔g3

Now the weakness of e4 splits the defenders and gives Black further headaches.

30...♔c7 31 ♜b2 ♜b7 (D)



A logical defensive try – a single rook ending would transform the a-pawn into a very serious source of counterplay.

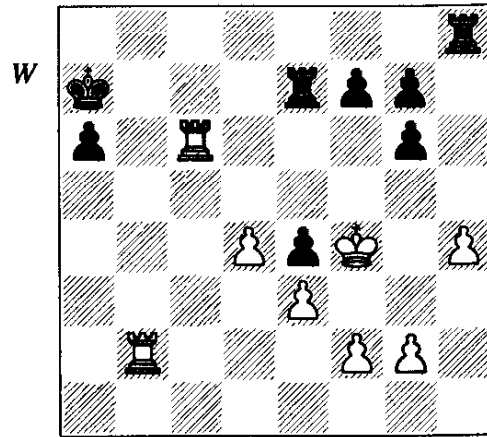
32 ♜c5+ ♔b8 33 ♜a2!

White avoids both simplification and the mobilization of the a-pawn. Sometimes chess can be an easy game, with such simple pointers leading the way to strong moves.

33...♜e7 34 ♔f4 ♔b7 35 ♜b2+ ♔a7 36 ♜c6!

Zugzwang. Both black rooks are paralysed by the need to cover weaknesses.

36...♜h8 (D)



37 ♜a2!

Pausing to protect the pawn on h4 would allow Black to organize defensive chances with ...♜h5. Just because White has improved his position using simple methods does not mean that he can relax!

37...a5

37...♜xh4+ 38 ♔g3 leads to the same thing.

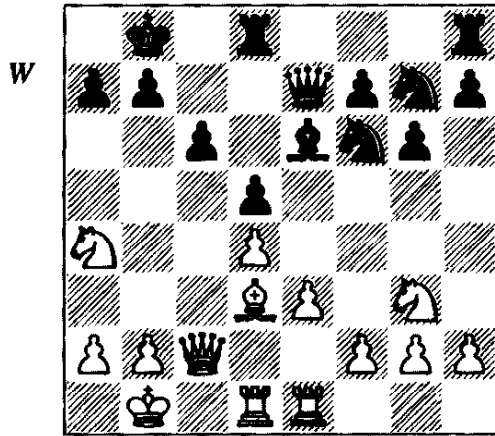
38 ♜xa5+ ♔b7 39 ♜ca6 ♜xh4+ 40 ♔g3 ♜h5 41 ♜a7+ ♔c6 42 ♜5a6+ ♔b5 43 ♜xe7 ♜g5+ 44 ♔h2 ♔xa6 45 ♜xf7 1-0

Beautiful technical play from Karpov, which illustrates the kind of small yet significant problems that often face Black in the minority-attack structure.

### Variations on a theme

Now we will examine a position with very clear similarities, but one very big difference – both players have castled queenside. Here White has two inviting and fairly obvious options, to post a knight on c5, and try to mount pressure behind it, or to prepare an

expansion in the centre. Hansen, despite using well-worn tools, finds a more original solution.



**L. B. Hansen – C. Hartman**  
*Gausdal 1991*

**16 ♔a1!?**

Preparing...

**16...h5 17 b4!**

...a minority attack! The risks with this plan when one's own king stands behind the advance are obvious. It is very interesting that White succeeds nonetheless in creating the typical positional pressure associated this idea.

**17...h4**

17...♙xb4 is far too risky: 18 ♘c5 ♙a3 19 ♖b1 and then:

a) 19...♙c8 20 ♘xb7! (20 ♘a6+ ♔a8 21 ♘c7+ ♔b8 22 ♙xc6 ♙xd3) 20...♙xb7 21 ♙xc6.

b) 19...b6 20 ♖b4! ♙a5 21 ♖eb1 with a big advantage to White as the black queen is in mortal danger.

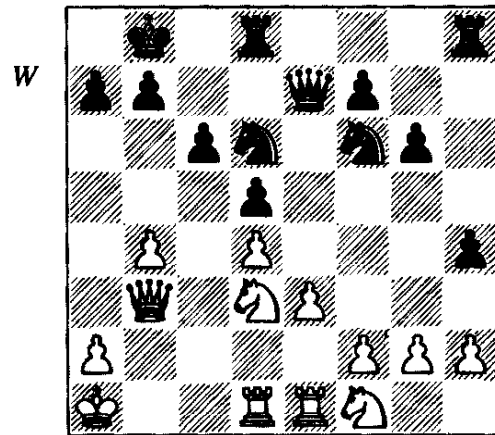
These variations remind us that Black's king is also on this flank.

**18 ♘f1!**

White chooses this square to prevent possible counterplay against h2.

The knight is also well placed to neutralize another potential drawback of his idea, a black steed taking up residence on c4.

18...♙f5 19 ♘c5 ♙xd3 20 ♘xd3 ♘f5 21 ♙b3 ♘d6 (D)



**22 a4**

Hansen continues with his expansionist plans, unruffled by the current habitat of his king.

**22...♖c8 23 ♖c1 ♘c4**

Black would like to utilize this outpost. The weakness of c4 is one of the obvious drawbacks of a minority attack. But badly timed occupation of c4 can also allow White to play...

**24 e4!**

...which tends to be a very useful gain of space.

**24...♙d8**

24...♘xe4 25 f3 wins material.

**25 e5 ♘e4 26 f3 ♘g5 27 h3!**

A precaution against Black generating counterplay on this flank by advancing here himself. Just because the white king is in residence elsewhere, this does not mean that securing this sector of the board is beneath White's notice. This is also a good example of

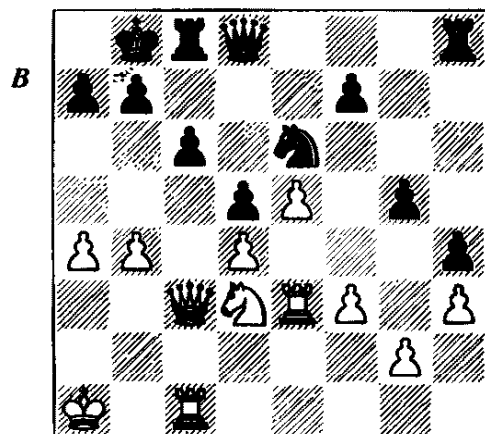


the proverb: *the enemy's vital point is your own*, mentioned in Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice.

27...♖e6 28 ♖c3 g5

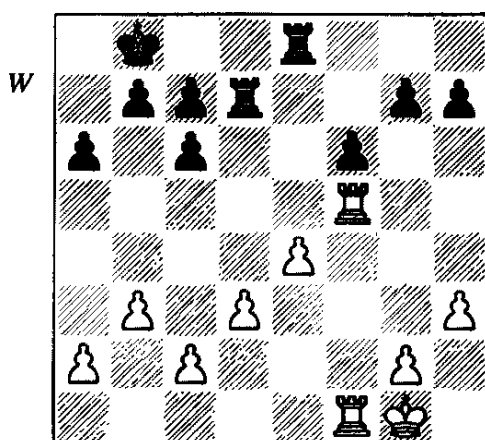
28...♖b6 29 ♖c5 is likely to be very similar to the game.

29 ♖e3 ♖xe3 30 ♖xe3 (D)



And White has achieved a small, enduring advantage. We will examine the rest of the game later in this chapter.

### The 'skeleton' of the minority attack



J. Capablanca – D. Janowski  
New York 1913

This position is one of many Capablanca endgame classics. That would

be reason enough for the student to consider placing it in his strategic arsenal, but it is particularly relevant to examine it now. If White's d-pawn were an f-pawn, we would have the familiar pawn constellation of an Exchange Spanish (1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♖b5 a6 4 ♖xc6 dxc6) and White would have a very clear plan – realizing what is in effect an extra pawn on the kingside. Nevertheless, the current structure is also very well known to us, though, for psychological reasons, this may be less apparent.

1 g4!

Yes, now it becomes clearer: this is a minority attack in mirror image. Ordinarily, one of the motives behind this would be to weaken a pawn on e5. In this particular pawn structure, the assault on f6 will either create a weakness or turn the white e-pawn into a passed pawn.

1...b6 2 b4

Prophylaxis – White prevents his opponent from gaining space on the queenside.

2...♖b7 3 ♖f2 b5 4 a4!

To hinder ...a5.

4...♖d4 5 ♖b1 ♖e5

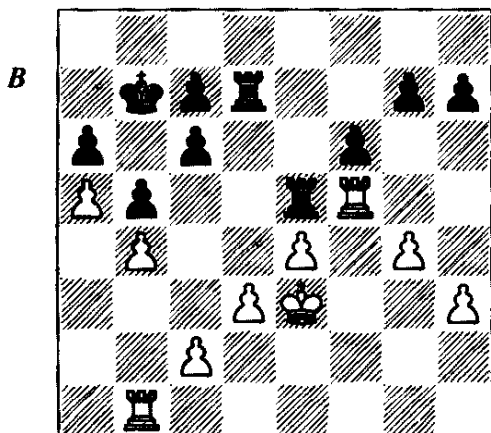
If 5...bxa4 then 6 ♖a5 (6 ♖e3 ♖d7 7 ♖a1). This illustrates a rather unusual method of restricting counterplay on the queenside. At first glance White's fourth move seems to invite turmoil on this flank. This is a good example of a logical move being a far from obvious move.

6 ♖e3 ♖d7

If instead 6...♖xf5 then 7 gxf5 and White gains the g-file for pressure and

increases his pawn presence in the centre.

7 a5 (D)



The restraining operation on the queenside is now complete, and White can turn his attention to chipping away on the opposite flank.

7...♞e6 8 ♞b1 ♞de7 9 g5 fxg5 10 ♞xg5 ♞h6 11 ♞g3 ♞he6 12 h4 g6 13 ♞g5

Planning h5. This methodical breaking down of this flank, in order either to gain lines of entry or to create weaknesses, is another recognizable hallmark of the minority attack.

13...h6 14 ♞g4 ♞g7 15 d4 ♔c8 16 ♞f8+ ♔b7

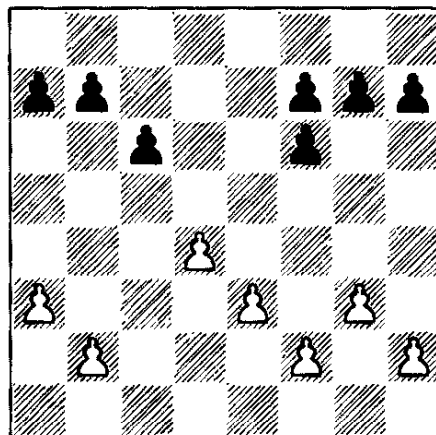
16...♔d7 17 ♞a8.

17 e5 g5 18 ♔e4 ♞ee7 19 hxg5 hxg5 20 ♞f5 ♔c8 21 ♞gxg5 ♞h7 22 ♞h5 ♔b7 23 ♞xh7 ♞xh7 24 ♞f8 1-0

The reflection of the board hinders us from making such identifications easily, and this is something worth noting. If one had the mirror structure on the board...

(see following diagram)

...there would be almost no hesitation in finding the correct plan. Right?

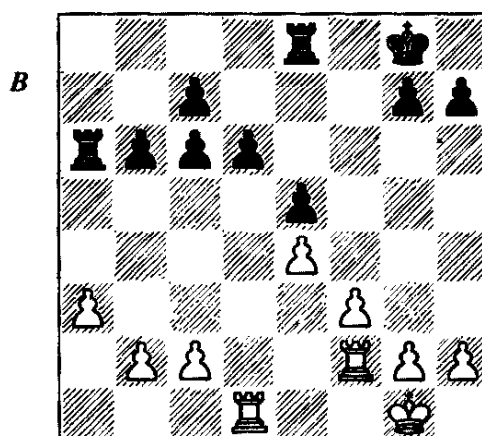


J. Capablanca – D. Janowski  
(Mirror structure)

Once the procedure indicated by the pattern was applied, White won with impressive ease. It is worth repeating that this motif becomes more effective in a simplified position.

### Reinforcing the image

Here is another example of the Capa / minority combination in action:



I. Kan – J. Capablanca  
Moscow 1936

1...b5 2 ♞fd2 c5 3 ♔f2 ♞a4 4 ♔e2 ♔f7 5 ♞d3 ♔e6 6 ♔d2 ♞b8 7 ♞c3 g5

After improving his position on the other sectors of the board, Capablanca again sets the familiar attack in motion. In fact, it is worth noting that the work of securing the other areas of the board is a priority in both of the Capablanca examples. This is one of the hallmarks of good technique. The critical operation takes place at an unhurried pace. Careful preparation rules out counterplay and guarantees that the main task of engineering a breakthrough occurs with a minimum of distraction.

8 h3 h5 9 ♖h1 ♗d4+ 10 ♕e2 ♖g8  
11 ♗d3 ♗a4

Black avoids exchanges. He now creates the possibility of ...c6 and ...d5. Note also that the control of the 4th rank is very advantageous. It gives Black a greater command of space and several active options for pawn expansion.

12 ♗hd1 g4 13 hxg4 hxg4 14 ♕e3

If 14 ♗h1, then 14...gxf3+ enables Black to invade.

14...♗h8! 15 ♗b3

After 15 fxg4 ♗g8 16 ♕f3 ♗f8+ Black will place another rook on the fourth rank.

15...♗h2

White is now under serious pressure, though it is beyond the scope of this book to determine whether he is clinically lost. In any event, the conclusion of the game was:

16 ♗d2 ♗d4 17 ♗e2

17 ♗xd4 leaves White with a very passive rook and troubles defending the c-pawn.

17...c6 18 ♗c3

18 fxg4 is always ill-advised. The extra pawn means nothing, but the three weaknesses (e4, g4 and g2) are very serious. After 18...c4 19 ♗c3 d5 White's position implodes along the fourth rank.

18...g3 19 ♗d3

After 19 f4 ♗h4 20 f5+ ♕f6 21 ♕f3 ♗f4+ White will be left with many pawns that are only targets, as opposed to Black's mighty pawn-mass.

19...♗h1 20 f4 ♗f1 21 f5+ ♕f6 22 c3 ♗xd3+ 23 ♕xd3 d5 24 b3 c4+

24...♗a1!? was also strong.

25 bxc4 bxc4+ 26 ♕e3 ♗a1

26...♗c1 allows a bit of counterplay with 27 ♗a2.

27 ♕f3 ♗xa3 28 ♕xg3

28 ♗e3 ♗b3 followed by ...d4 ends resistance.

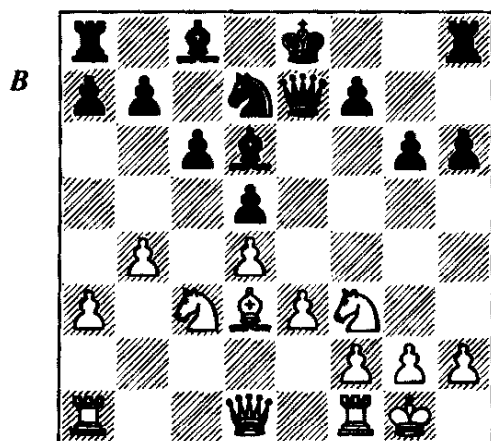
28...♗xc3+ 29 ♕h4 ♗c1 30 g4 ♗h1+ 31 ♕g3 d4 32 ♗a2 d3 33 ♕g2 ♗e1 34 ♕f2 ♗xe4 0-1

### The ...c5 advance

L. van Wely – M. Gurevich  
Germany 1996

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6  
5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 7 e3 ♘d7 8 a3  
g6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 b4 ♙d6 11 ♙d3  
♗e7 12 0-0 (D)

Again it is the pawn structure that allows us to categorize this example with confidence. Black is further behind in development than usual due to a high number of early pawn moves. Note however, that this may be a very transient consideration. If you compare it to the fairly common development



seen in Mozny-Dumitrache in the next example, you will see that it is possible for Black to *win* time. Since Black often wants to put his dark-squared bishop on the b8-h2 diagonal to create attacking chances, he obtains this set-up much faster than in a normal Queen's Gambit, where ...♙e7xf6-e7-d6 is played. The value of the moves ...g6 and ...h6 is harder to assess.

**12...♘f6**

Black supports d5 to create the possibility of answering b5 with ...c5.

**13 b5 c5!**

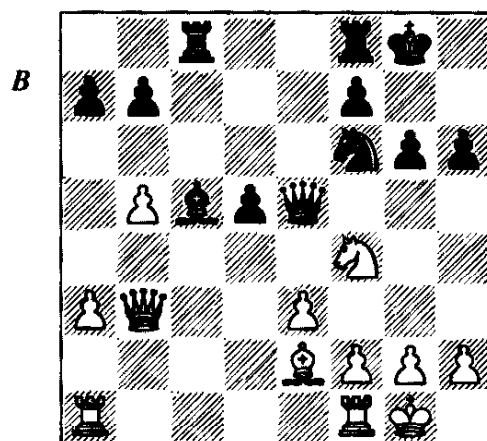
A good example of this advance holding the balance against a minority attack.

**14 dxc5 ♙xc5 15 ♖b3 ♙e6 16 ♘d4 0-0 17 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 18 ♘e2 ♖ac8 19 ♘f4?!**

The knight was better placed on e2, where it was not exposed and monitored the d4-square. The position called for 19 ♖ac1, with chances for both players.

**19...♖e5! 20 ♙e2 (D)**

After 20 ♙xg6 fxg6 21 ♘xg6 ♖h5 22 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 Black's pieces are well-placed to create attacking chances on the kingside.



**20...♙d6!**

The b8-h2 diagonal is a typical source of counterplay for Black.

**21 g3 ♖c3**

Black's active pieces clearly give him his full share of play. After...

**22 ♖a4 d4!**

...Black seized the initiative thanks to the weakness of d4 and f4. Capturing on d4 is risky in view of the variations 23 exd4 (23 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 24 exd4 ♙xf4 25 gxf4 ♘d5) 23...♖e4, as given by M. Gurevich.

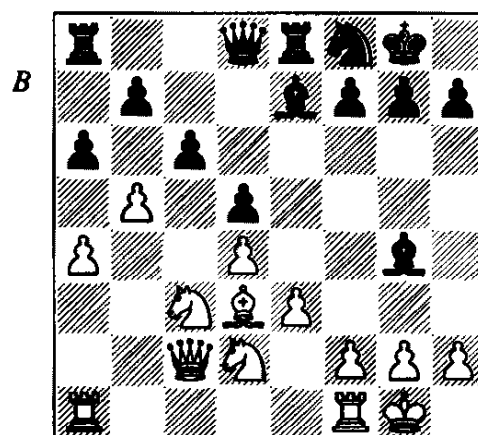
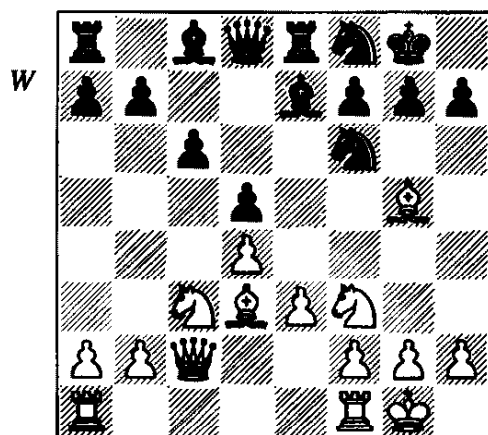
**The classic duel; weakness on c6 versus kingside activity**

**M. Mozny – D. Dumitrache**  
*Odorheiu Z 1995*

**1 c4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 d4 c6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 ♖c2 ♙e7 7 ♙g5 ♘bd7 8 e3 0-0 9 ♙d3 ♖e8 10 0-0 ♘f8 (D)**

**11 ♙xf6**

Another typical plan in this basic position. White avoids freeing exchanges with ...♘c4 and deflects the black bishop from covering the square b4, thereby setting the stage for the minority attack. Now we should be wary



of differences from previous examples, as here Black has the bishop pair.

**11...xf6 12 b4 a6 13 a4?!**

This robotic move shows that White (probably) has only a superficial acquaintance with the dynamics of the minority attack. Then again, that may be an unjustifiably insulting assessment. Perhaps Mr Mozny was simply having an off-day. In any case, this was not a great move. It is not enough just to achieve the thrust b4-b5 and then settle down to the job of assailing c6.

13 ♖a4! is a much more efficient reaction. White should send his knight into c5 first, which blocks the f8-a3 diagonal. Not only does this hinder Black's counterplay with the bishop on this diagonal (a vital difference between this and the Karpov-Ljubojević game), it utilizes the a4-square which becomes blocked in the game.

**13...g4 14 ♘d2 ♙e7 15 b5 (D) 15...a5!**

An excellent reaction – Black gains control of the b4-square (another element of this particular position which is linked to Black's possession of the bishop pair), minimizes the number of open lines on the queenside, and rules

out the use of the a4-square for the white knight. Irish-based GM Alexander Baburin, writing in *ChessBase Magazine*, attributes this concept to Boris Spassky. This was news to me, but since the former world champion is a virtuoso in the subtleties of the Queen's Gambit, I can well believe it. This is not just trivia, either – by knowing who specializes in what, one can more easily find a role model for a certain type of position.

**16 bxc6 bxc6 17 ♘a2?!**

Baburin recommends 17 ♙f5!?, which is by far the most logical move here, in my opinion. The exchange favours White in general, and removes one potential attacker in particular.

**17...♙d6!**

Black plays with great energy, and takes aim at the white king. This game is a good example of almost all of Black's trumps in the basic Exchange Queen's Gambit structure. He is not necessarily doomed to defence of c6, but has active piece play against the white king. White must take care to strike the proper balance between invading the queenside and abandoning his monarch.

**18 ♖fc1?!**

An apparently logical reaction, clearing the f1-square for a defender (either the bishop to shore up g2, or the knight to support h2) while increasing the pressure on the c6-pawn. Grabbing c6 at once is very risky: 18 ♜xc6 ♜c8 19 ♜b5 (not 19 ♜xd5?? ♙xh2+) 19... ♜b8 20 ♜a6 (20 ♜c6 ♜c8 =) 20... ♜e6 (20... ♜a8 =) 21 ♜a7 ♜b2 22 ♘b1 ♙xh2+ 23 ♙xh2 ♜h4+ 24 ♙g1 ♜h6 mates. However, 18 ♙f5!? was still a sensible choice.

**18... ♜f6!**

Black continues to play boldly. He rules out the possibility of ♙f5, which would dampen his attacking chances. 18... ♜e6?! is a reflex choice, but one should play with the head rather than the hand when possible. 18... ♜e6 does not deal with ♙f5 and also prevents the black bishop on g4 from retreating to d7 in an emergency.

**19 ♘f1**

19 ♜xc6 ♙xh2+ 20 ♙xh2 ♜xf2 21 ♜c2!? (Ftačnik; 21 ♘f1 ♜e6 -+) 21... ♜e6 22 ♘f3 ♜xe3 23 ♜xa8 ♜h6+ 24 ♙g3 ♙xf3 gives Black a ferocious attack, e.g. 25 gxf3 ♜g5+ 26 ♙f2 ♜h2+ 27 ♙f1 ♜h1+ and Black has at least perpetual check, as well as the option of recovering most of his material investment while continuing the attack.

**19... ♜ac8 20 ♜ab1 ♘g6**

Now that White has committed himself to a defensive set-up with a knight on f1, Black sets out to attack g2, which has become the softest spot in the kingside carapace. This illustrates one of the drawbacks of any

decision. The f1-square was a flexible defensive post for g2 or h2, but once White decides what he will put there, which square is weakest becomes clear.

**21 ♜b6**

21 h3!? (Ftačnik) deserved serious consideration, though it is understandable that White did not want to indulge in creating potential weaknesses on the flank where he is under pressure. The rule of thumb about not weakening the king's shelter imparts useful advice, but general rules can also get you into trouble in specific cases.

**21... ♙a3 22 ♜cb1**

22 ♜xc6? ♙xc1 (22... ♜xc6 23 ♜xc6 ♙xc1?? 24 ♜xe8+) 23 ♜xf6 ♜xc2 24 ♙xc2 gxf6 leaves White with a lost ending.

**22... ♘h4**

Now the pressure against g2 makes ... ♙h3 a threat.

**23 ♜1b3?**

After 23 ♘g3 h5 Black saves the h-pawn by launching it into the attack. One idea then would be to sacrifice on g2 and play ... h4. 23 ♙xh7+ ♙h8 (planning ... g6) 24 ♙d3 ♘xg2 does nothing to solve White's problems.

**23... ♘xg2!**

Black tactically exploits White's sudden lack of control over the e1-square.

**24 ♜xa3**

24 ♙xg2 ♜f3+ 25 ♙g1 ♙h3 is an obvious mating net.

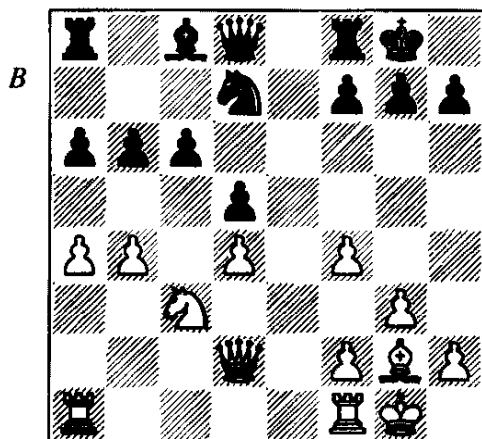
**24... ♘e1 25 ♜c1**

25 ♙xh7+ does not change anything, e.g. 25... ♙h8 26 ♜c3 ♜f3 27 ♜xe1 ♙h3.

25...♔f3 26 ♔xe1 0-1

White resigned before Black could play 26...♕h3.

### Creating a passed a-pawn



**J. Speelman – V. Korchnoi**  
*Biel IZ 1993*

The placement of the white bishop differs from an Orthodox Queen's Gambit, but the structural similarities are apparent.

16...♖f6 17 b5

White does not have so much else to do here.

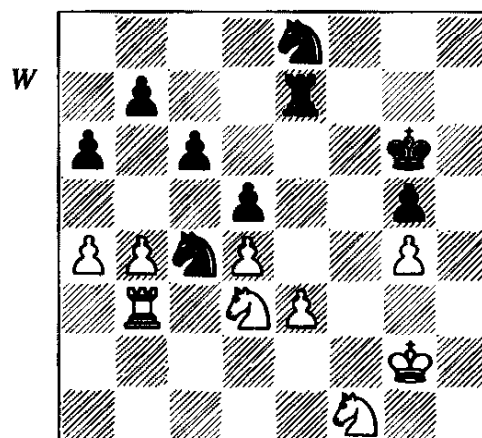
17...axb5

17...cxb5!? 18 axb5 a5 creating a passed a-pawn frightened Speelman quite a bit here. This change of structure is one of the less common ways of combating a minority attack. There are often practical difficulties with it for Black – either the a- or d-pawn comes under attack too quickly, or White can use the c-file or isolate the a-pawn with b5-b6. If Black can get a knight to c4, however, this structural change can often be more favourable for him (as White has less influence

over b6, and the c-file). I imagine that in this particular case Korchnoi was satisfied with the solid alternative.

18 axb5 ♖b7 19 bxc6 ♕xc6 20 ♖ab1 ♖e8 21 ♖b4 ♖e7 22 ♖fb1 ½-½

Here is a more vivid example of this plan's potential:



**R. Djurhuus – A. Kveinys**  
*Manila OL 1992*

Here we have a position that shows that it is not always an advantage to have a simplified version of a minority attack. Here Black has defended well and White's efforts to make progress have resulted in pawn weaknesses at e3 and g4 that make Black's life simpler.

44 b5?!

Here this advance is very strongly met by the strategic option:

44...cxb5!

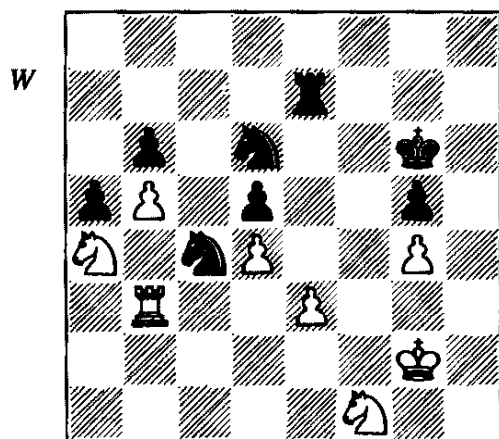
Not 44...♖xe3+?? 45 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 46 ♖e5+ and White wins.

45 axb5 a5!

...and Black has a clear advantage. In an ending with knights the outside passed pawn is doubly dangerous. As

mentioned before, the presence of a black knight on c4 negates many of the potential drawbacks of the ...cxb5 plan.

46 ♖b2 ♜ed6 47 ♖a4 b6 (D)



Now White has three serious pawn weaknesses (b5, e3 and g4). Black's pieces are well placed to maintain pressure while covering his own potential targets. He has also taken control of the c5-square, therefore the transformation of the queenside structure in Black's favour is complete.

48 ♜b1 ♜e4

Preventing the knight's re-entry via c3.

49 ♜c1 ♜f7 50 ♔g1 ♔g7!

The king prepares to shoulder the responsibility of guarding either d5 or b6.

51 ♜d1

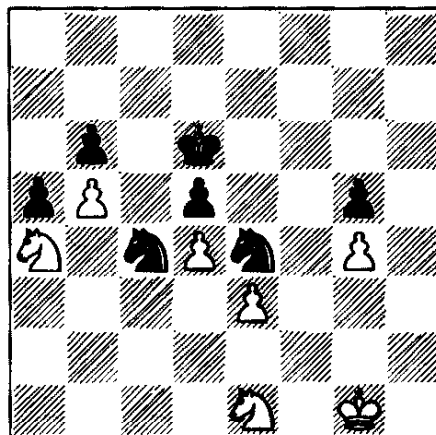
After 51 ♜c3 ♜xc3 52 ♜xc3 a4 the a-pawn is too dangerous.

51... ♔f8 52 ♜e1 ♜h7 53 ♜h2 ♜h3 54 ♜f1+ ♔e7 55 ♜f3 ♜xf3 56 ♜xf3 ♔d6 57 ♜e1 (D)

57... ♔e6

Threatening ...♜ed6. 57... ♔c7 58 ♜c2 ♜f6 59 ♜c3 ♔d6 was another

B



possibility, but Kveinys's way is nice since it never decentralizes the king.

58 ♜c2 ♜f6

White has been outmanoeuvred.

59 ♜c3 ♜xg4 60 e4 dxe4 61 ♜xe4 ♔f5 62 ♜c3 ♜ge3 63 ♜e1 ♔e6 64 ♔f2 ♜d5 65 ♜e4 ♔f5 66 ♜g3+ ♔g4 67 ♜d3 ♜c3 0-1

The knights pave the way for the coronation of the a-pawn.

## Plans

There are many other position types that can be studied in this way. One of the most useful is the IQP (isolated queen's pawn) since positions featuring such a pawn can arise from a vast number of different openings. Different kinds of pawn storms are worth investigating. Sicilian positions where the kings reside on opposite flanks, and King's Indians where they are both on the kingside, spring immediately to mind.

I have heard chilling tales of the virtuosity of certain Russian GMs who have clearly done this kind of work. They can challenge their opponents, while discussing, say, some



typical King's Indian attacking position, to arrange their forces in different ways, and then immediately display the different defensive plans required to stymie the various black offensives.

The possibilities are virtually endless, and one can examine the subtypes in greater and greater detail. You should find no shortage of ideas or potential projects of your own here.

The entire topic of plans has been sparsely documented. What I have outlined above is a kind of search for recurring plans in popular position types. However, since the whole project of cataloguing plans is embryonic, one should make careful note of any logical long-range action that impresses. It is easy to overlook the subtle groundwork that occurs in strategic games. Such games are rarely a case of prolonged manoeuvring followed by a decisive error – at least not in games worth studying. Small advantages are accumulated, trumps are exploited, assets are converted. Try to map the course of the gentler undercurrents in games.

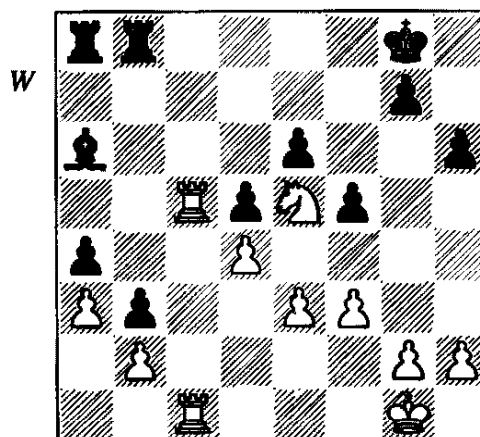
### The Active King

This topic has always been a favourite of mine. Because the king tends to lead a sheltered life, examples where the most valuable piece goes on bold excursions never fail to seize my attention. Besides offering instructive information, the topic also has elements of creativity built in to it.

Why? Because king marches are generally counterintuitive, and with

good reason. You won't get far in this game if you make a habit out of charging your king into the fray.

First, a graphic example of the king's power, just to play through and savour.



**A. Alekhine – F. Yates**

*London 1922*

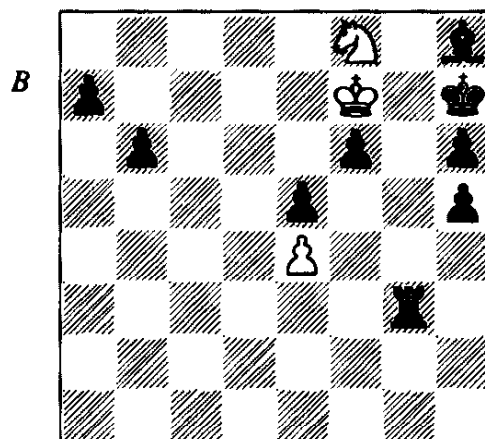
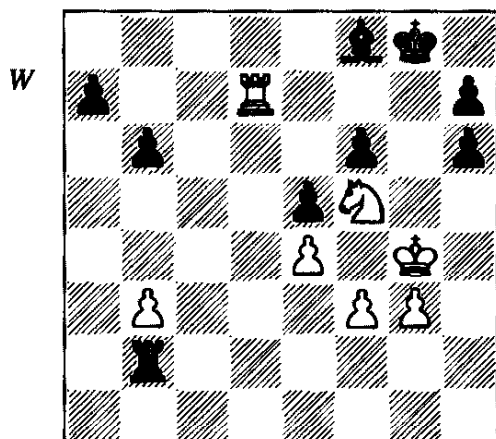
**1 ♔f2 ♔h7 2 h4!**

This advance stakes out even more space and guarantees an undisturbed march.

**2... ♖f8 3 ♔g3 ♜fb8 4 ♜c7 ♙b5 5 ♜1c5 ♙a6 6 ♜5c6 ♜e8 7 ♔f4 ♔g8 8 h5 ♙f1 9 g3 ♙a6 10 ♜f7 ♔h7 11 ♜cc7 ♜g8 12 ♘d7 ♔h8 13 ♘f6! ♜gf8 14 ♜xg7 ♜xf6 15 ♔e5! 1-0**

The retreat of the rook to f8 allows mate in two.

White's complete domination of the position eliminated any risk to his monarch. What is noteworthy was Alekhine's clear plan, and the inclusion of the king as a central, aggressive participant. This really is an illustration – White's position was so overwhelming that he could win in more mundane ways.



**E. Gausel – Th. Thorhallsson**  
*Reykjavik Z 1995*

Again White's trumps are obvious, but this time material is greatly reduced, particularly White's supply of pawns.

40 ♖e3! ♜xb3 41 ♖d5 h5+ 42 ♔f5!

This game is not about material; it is about invasion and activity.

42...♗g7

42...♜xf3+ 43 ♔e6 a5 44 ♖xf6+ ♜xf6+ 45 ♔xf6 a4 46 ♜b7 a3 47 ♜xb6 and White wins easily due to Black's enduring paralysis.

43 ♔e6 h6 44 ♖e7+ ♔h8 45 ♖f5

White prefers a steady rather than a spectacular finish. While watching this game I was rooting for the wonderful variation 45 ♔f7! ♜xf3 46 ♖g6+ ♔h7 47 ♜d8 ♜xg3 48 ♜h8+! ♗xh8 49 ♖f8# (D).

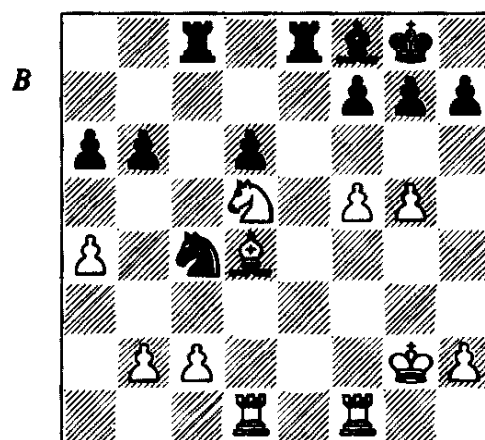
A beautiful non-materialistic finish that poetically depicts White's advantage in space.

45...♗f8 46 ♔f7 ♗c5 47 ♔g6 1-0

Again, the power of the king was better conveyed by the moves of this game than by commentary. One additional factor that comes to mind is that

the combination of rook and knight in these examples hints at a blessed partnership. In both examples they constitute a tremendous attacking force, lethal when joined by the king.

**Quiz**



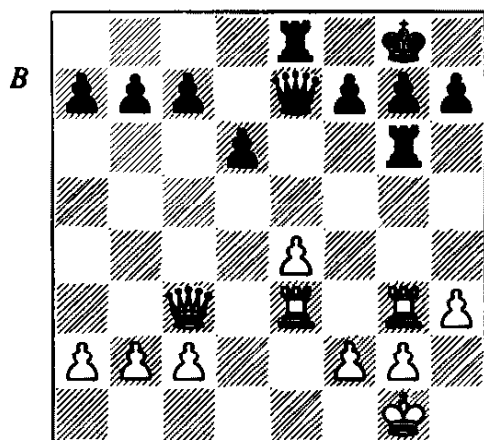
**V. Tseshkovsky – L. Polugaevsky**  
*Riga IZ 1979*  
 Black to play

*In this typical Sicilian structure, White's king and exposed pawns on the second rank give Black tactical possibilities. Can you spot a combination for Black and assess the resulting position?*

*(Solution p. 219)*

## A bold march

So far we have seen nothing revolutionary. The previous examples have been rather simplified positions where one should virtually assume that the king should join the action. Now we move on to braver expeditions. The next game is one of my absolute favourites, though when you see it you may wonder why. I will try to explain.



**C. Schlechter – Em. Lasker**  
*Vienna Wch (5) 1910*

**20...♔f8!?**

A remarkable move. Even in the context of lectures touching upon the king march, this move does not immediately leap to mind. Of course, there is no commitment to royal emigration yet.

**21 ♖xg6 hxg6**

Now the position has become a bit more simplified, so king wandering becomes more plausible.

**22 ♗b4 c6**

Tarrasch noted 22...b6 23 ♗a4 a5 24 ♗c6 as being clearly better for White. This only demonstrates feeble

play by Black. Lasker aims for a flexible pawn structure on this wing.

**23 ♗a3 a6 24 ♗b3**

This probing by the white queen accomplishes very little. Leaving the queen posted on the long dark diagonal, where it monitors e5 and g7, looks much more sensible. On the other hand, nothing much is happening yet, in what is clearly a balanced position. In most instances this game would be given up as drawn. Lasker's determination and ingenuity now come to the fore. History tends to label Lasker as a greater psychologist than player. This game shows that he excelled at both. He finds a way to sharpen the struggle both objectively and subjectively. His conduct of this game is one of the greatest lessons in exploiting every chance on a chessboard I have ever seen.

**24...♞d8 25 c4 ♞d7**

Now Black has secured his only weaknesses. The rook on d7 also has potential on the file in the event of a trade of queens on e5. In endings his king is already a little closer to the centre. It is not much, but such tiny considerations are the basis of real advantages. They also prey on the mind of the opponent.

**26 ♗d1 ♗e5 27 ♗g4 (D)**

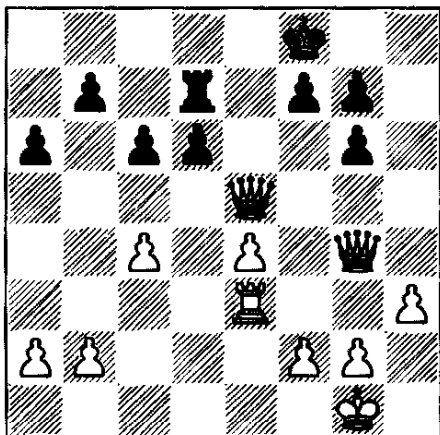
**27...♔e8!**

He's off!

**28 ♗e2 ♔d8 29 ♗d2 ♔c7**

What exactly does Black accomplish with his wandering king? Basically, he heightens the tension, and sharpens the struggle. The scope for a decisive result has increased greatly.

B



Black's king supports his queenside pawns. This frees his pieces from the defence of b7 and d6. It may even give him the option of mobilizing his pawn majority on this flank. Black would have to weigh up the pros of having an extra piece in the action, against the obvious cons of that piece being a king.

Another option created by the king's exodus is an eventual attack on the kingside. Black also gains a certain flexibility. He can offer to play endgames where his centralized king can quickly become a critical factor. Finally, he gives a very clear indication that he is doing something. By leading with his king, he can also provoke White into taking unjustified action. Quite a long list of accomplishments!

**30 a3 ♖e7 (D)**

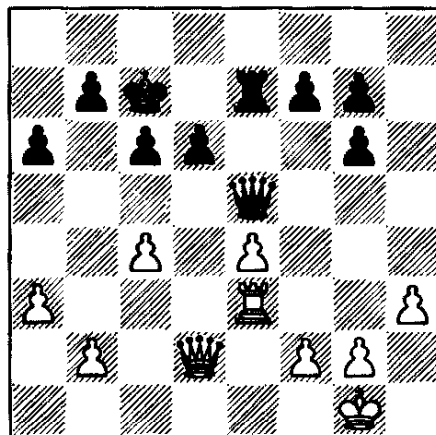
**31 b4**

Here it comes. White charges at the red flag. He envisions prying open the shell around the black king with an eventual advance to b5. Lasker demonstrates that he has the superior control over this flank.

**31...b5!!**

This improves Black's pawn structure enormously. He gains greater

W



central presence and fixes the a-pawn as a weakness. For the moment his king is safe enough.

**32 cxb5**

This shift in pawn structure favours Black, but it was difficult to avoid: 32 ♖c2 ♖d4 or 32 ♖d3 ♖a1+ 33 ♔h2 ♖c1.

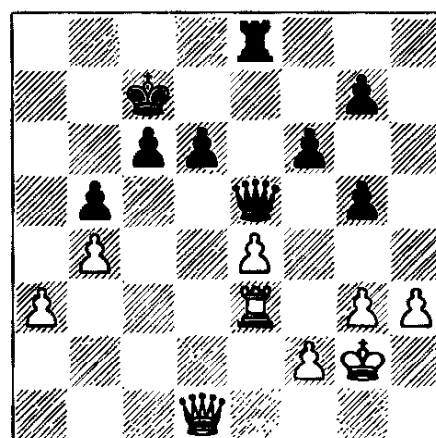
**32...axb5 33 g3**

Perhaps this move was designed to play f4, but it only weakens his kingside.

**33...g5 34 ♔g2 ♖e8 35 ♖d1 f6 (D)**

35...♖a8 looks safer but as Tarrasch pointed out 36 ♖h5 creates annoying counterplay. Lasker keeps his forces centralized.

W



**36 ♖b3?!**

This was rightly criticized by many commentators, who preferred 36 a4. Black would still have the edge after 36...bxa4 37 ♖xa4 ♜b8 (or 37...♞d4), which is similar to the game, though admittedly White has gained a bit of time in this version.

36...♞e6 37 ♞d1?!

37 ♞xe6 ♜xe6 would have kept Black's advantage to a minimum. On the other hand, it would justify Lasker's inventive play. The game continuation offers White much greater losing chances, but by keeping the queens on he also retains hopes of punishing Black's ambitious king.

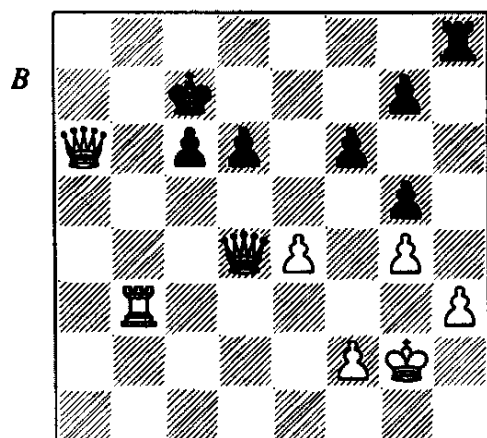
37...♜h8! 38 g4 ♞c4!?

38...♜a8 would prevent complications, but that is not what Lasker wants.

39 a4 ♞xb4

Capablanca preferred 39...bxa4 40 ♞xa4 ♜b8, which also leaves White on the ropes.

40 axb5 ♞xb5 41 ♜b3 ♞a6 42 ♞d4 (D)



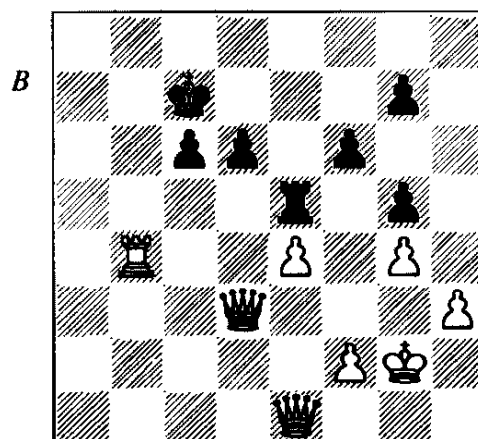
Schlechter now plans ♞b2, to control the a- and b-files. Lasker has succeeded in completely unbalancing the position and even winning material.

Schlechter banks on the black king being too exposed to allow serious winning chances.

42...♜e8! 43 ♜b1 ♜e5 44 ♞b4 ♞b5

Schlechter pointed out that the alternative 44...♜b5?! fails to 45 ♞c4! pinning the rook and planning an excursion into the sensitive spot on f7.

45 ♞e1 ♞d3 46 ♜b4 (D)



What an amazing transformation has taken place from the tedious position we saw at the beginning! Now Lasker is at the threshold of victory. He has activated his forces, preventing White from harassing his king. Up to here the game has been memorable for the impressive array of positive things Lasker has done. Now, sadly I can't help feeling, the game becomes instructive for completely different reasons. With the point within reach, Lasker relaxes his vigilance. Instead of snuffing out counterplay, he decides that he can ride out any storm.

46...c5?

Lasker has reckoned that the advancing c-pawn will tip the scales further in his favour. This is very understandable as it not only threatens to

promote, it cuts off the protection of e4. However, the move also exposes his king further, and interferes with the co-operation of his pieces in defence. Schlechter exploits his attacking chances with great precision.

Several commentators proposed 46...♖a5!? 47 ♜b3! (Bernstein gave the variations 47 ♛c1 ♖a2! and 47 ♜b2 ♖a4!, both with marked advantage to Black) 47...♛xb3 48 ♛xa5+ when the queen endings after Schlechter's 48...♛b6 or Tarrasch's 48...♔b7 49 ♛d8 ♛e6 50 f3 d5 51 exd5 cxd5 are both painful for White.

46...♜b5! was Capablanca's prescription for a happy ending to Lasker's adventurous performance.

47 ♖a4 c4 48 ♛a1!

Not 48 f3?? ♛c2+.

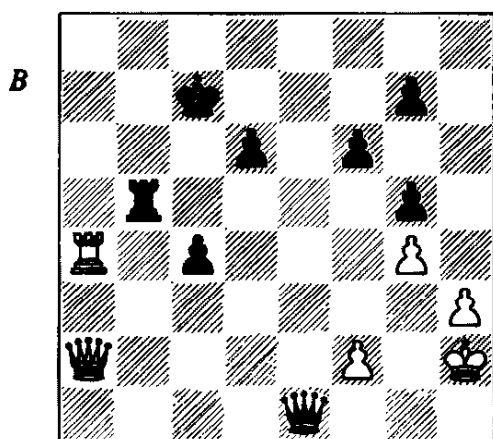
48...♛xe4+ 49 ♔h2 ♜b5

Threatens a decisive check on e5.

50 ♛a2! ♛e5+

Not 50...♜b3?? 51 ♛xb3 ♛f4+ 52 ♛g3 and White wins – Schlechter.

51 ♔g1 ♛e1+ 52 ♔h2 (D)



52...d5

The black queen prevents a later check on a5, so he presses forward.

Black would be happier with the pawn shell nearer his king.

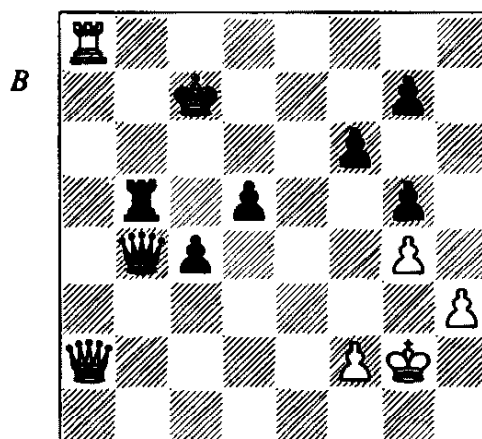
53 ♖a8!

Suddenly threatening 54 ♛a7+ ♜b7 55 ♛c5+ with a winning attack. 53 ♖a7+ ♜b7 would have achieved nothing.

53...♛b4

Of course Lasker does not consider 53...♛e5+ 54 ♔g1 (54 ♔g2 ♛e4+ 55 f3 ♛d4 – Capablanca) 54...♛e1+ 55 ♔h2 ♛e5+ with perpetual.

54 ♔g2 (D)



Threatening to play ♛a6, which was impossible at once due to the check on d6.

54...♛c5?

A time-pressure error. Schlechter gave the variation 54...♜b8 55 ♛a7+ ♜b7 56 ♛e3 ♛d6 57 ♜e8 d4 58 ♛e4 winning, and advocated 54...♜b7! as still offering winning chances for Black.

55 ♛a6!

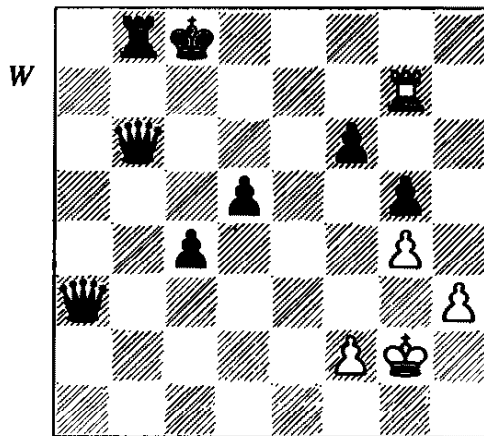
Suddenly Black's position is critical.

55...♜b8?

55...♜b7 56 ♛e6! ♜b8 57 ♛f7+ ♔c8 58 ♛e8+ winning, was given by

Schlechter. However, the world champions noted that Black can continue the fight by playing with a rook and the dangerous c-pawn against a queen. Lasker gave simply 55...c3! as being an equal ending, while Capablanca was more cautious, offering the variation 55...♖b6 56 ♖c8+ ♔d6 57 ♠a6 ♖xa6 58 ♖xa6+ ♔c5 with no clear assessment. After the text-move, the black king is hunted down.

56 ♠a7+ ♔d8 57 ♠xg7 ♖b6 58 ♖a3 ♔c8 (D)



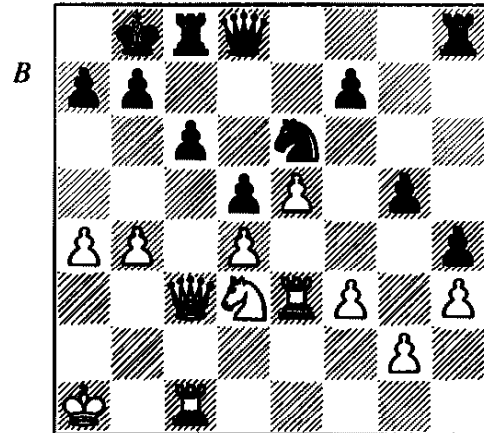
1-0

Black resigned since if 58...♖b4, 59 ♖a7! wins, while after 58...♔c8, 59 ♖f8+ ♖d8 60 ♖c5+ ♖c7 61 ♖xc7# follows.

A tremendous struggle, and an excellent advertisement for the instructive value the old classics have to offer.

### A leisurely stroll

Now is an apt time to examine the finish of this game, which featured in our look at the minority attack. White managed to achieve a typical kind of



L.B. Hansen – C. Hartman  
Gausdal 1991

positional superiority, despite the odd circumstance of both kings being on the queenside. How Hansen used this to eventually win the game is worthy of close study. At first White's preferred method of making progress is familiar – simplification.

30...♠e8 31 ♔c5 b6 32 ♔xe6 fxe6 33 ♖d2 ♖e7 34 a5 ♠f8 35 ♠a3 ♠f4 36 axb6 axb6 37 ♠c2 ♠c7 38 ♠ca2 ♠b7 39 ♠a8+ ♔c7 40 ♠2a7 ♠f8 41 ♖c3 ♠xa8 42 ♠xa8 ♠b8 43 ♠a6 ♖e8 44 ♖a3 ♖f8 45 ♠a7+ ♠b7 46 ♠a8 ♖f4 47 ♖c3 ♠b8 48 ♠a2 ♔b7

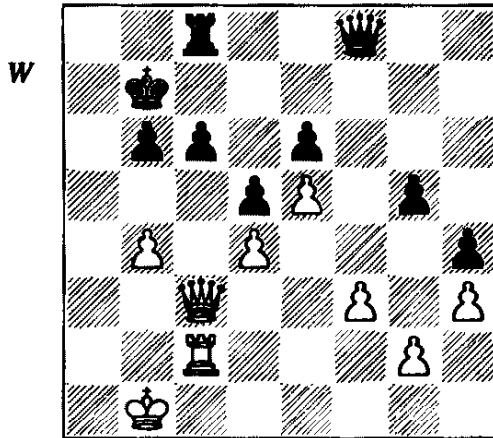
Black now faces the kind of unpleasant defensive chore that has given the minority attack such a good name. The c6-pawn requires constant attention, and the material remaining is sparse, which allows White to probe weaknesses without too much fear of backlash.

49 ♔b1

Frees the queen from guarding c1.

49...♖f8 50 ♠c2 ♠c8 (D)

Black's position is passive but remains to be breached. Hansen finds



annoying ways to nag at his opponent, continuing the harassment.

**51 ♔c1!**

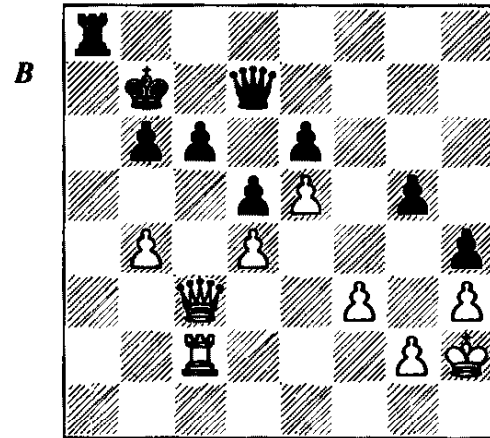
Now the white king sets off for a safer hiding place. Here the position is both static and fairly simplified, but still the idea always makes a striking impression (on me at least). With the queens on the board there is always an element of risk involved with king-wandering. Take a look back at the previous game if you think the position is *too* simplified. No matter how many times I see it, this royal dash rivets my attention as much as the film cliché of a hero crossing hostile gunfire.

**51... ♛e8 52 ♔d1 ♛d7 53 ♔e1 ♜a8 54 ♔f2**

Black can achieve nothing on the a-file because one piece is always tied to guarding the c6-pawn, a normal state of affairs in minority-attack positions.

**54... ♜f8 55 ♔g1 ♜a8 56 ♔h2 (D)**

Now the position looks more normal than perhaps at any time since the early opening. White has returned his king to his usual environment. The black counterpart has no comparably



safe haven. This realization increases the pain factor for the defender...

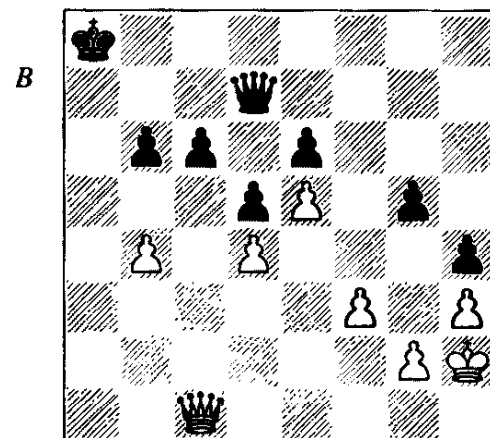
**56... ♜f8?**

Perhaps Black's tedious task became too much to bear when he saw that White had accomplished his mission of improving his king safety. Much tougher was sitting tight by passing with the rook on the a-file.

**57 ♜a2 ♜a8**

Trying to defend with 57... ♜b8 is no longer effective: 58 ♛a3 ♔c7 (58... ♔c8 59 ♛c1) 59 ♛c1 ♛e7 60 ♜c2, and again the weakness at c6 proves decisive.

**58 ♜xa8 ♔xa8 59 ♛c1 (D)**



White wins a pawn. The rest of the game demands far less from him than



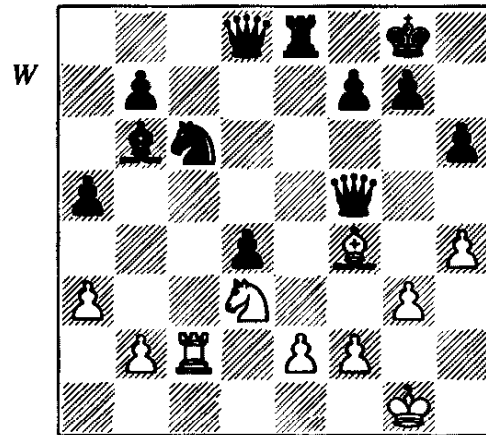
the previous tasks, and he finishes efficiently.

59...♖e7 60 ♜xc6+ ♔a7 61 b5 ♜f7 62 ♔g1 ♜f4 63 ♜c7+ ♔a8 64 ♜c8+ ♔a7 65 ♜a6+ ♔b8 66 ♜xb6+ ♔a8 67 ♜c6+ ♔b8 68 ♜c3 ♔b7 69 ♔f1 ♔b6 70 ♜c5+ ♔a5 71 b6+ ♔a6 72 ♜c8+ ♔xb6 73 ♜xe6+ ♔a7 74 ♜e7+ ♔a8 75 ♜d8+ ♔a7 76 ♜c7+ ♔a6 77 ♜c3 ♜f5 78 ♜e3 ♔b7 79 e6 ♔c6 80 e7 ♜b1+ 81 ♔f2 ♜b2+ 82 ♔g1 ♜b1+ 83 ♔h2 ♜b8+ 84 f4 1-0

To my mind, a very memorable game, and one which links the strategic patterns we have discussed very neatly. It is not necessarily the power of certain positional ideas that makes them useful, but the flexibility we gain by having a large store of them. In this game, the rather unusual implementation of a standard plan did not by any means win the game (as a successfully spotted tactical idea may), but it provided a means by which the struggle could be sharpened and prolonged. The use of the king-march played a more crucial role in the result.

The dash of the king in the middle-game has a much different nature than his active role in the endgame. Usually a king marches early in a game as a prelude to violent action on one flank. This often has a dramatic effect. Here is a vivid and instructive example which was burned into my memory cells, since I was an awe-struck young witness to the game (D):

White has a slight advantage, but it is very difficult to exploit this. Although Black has a passive bishop, his position remains solid. As long as



T. Petrosian – J. Peters  
*Lone Pine 1976*

there are several pieces on the board, the d4-pawn retains some dynamic potential, though in an ending it will most likely drop off. This hampers Black from trying to defend by simplifying. Psychologically, the prospect of an inferior ending is rendered even more unpalatable when one's opponent is a technician of Petrosian's calibre. And, White has one idea that Black can't match.

30 ♔f1! ♜e6 31 ♜b5 ♔a7 32 ♜b3 ♔c6 33 h5!

Petrosian cold-bloodedly stakes out more space. Such committal moves are not easy to play in time pressure.

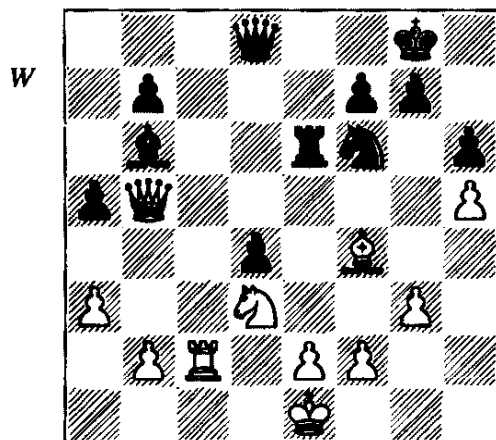
33...♔e7 34 ♔e1!

Petrosian declares his intentions. His more active pieces and more compact pawn structure give him one flexible option Black cannot dream of – the choice of relocating his king. This completely alters the complexion of the game.

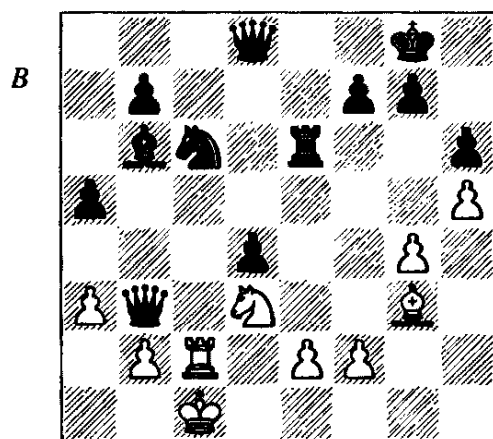
34...♔d5 35 ♜b5 ♔f6 (D)

35...♔xf4 36 ♔xf4 does not help Black, since the knight is stronger

than the passive bishop. If Black had time to jettison his d-pawn to increase the activity of his pieces, this continuation would offer interesting practical chances but since Black's rook is under attack, White can return the knight to the blockade next move.



36 ♖d1 ♕d5 37 ♗e5 ♜e7 38 g4  
 ♕c6 39 ♗g3 ♕a7 40 ♜b3 ♕c6 41  
 ♖c1 (D)



41...♜e4 42 f3 ♜e3 43 ♖b1

White completes his journey, and the players now have time to think and take stock. White's king transfer has allowed him to annex territory on the kingside safely. This means that the prospect of exchanges is even less

appealing than before, also since the white king is even nearer Black's weak d-pawn. The new positional factors give White the added possibility of active play on the kingside. Black collapses with remarkable speed in the second session.

43...♜e7?!

This allows White to achieve his desired exchange of minor pieces. Peters suggested the pass 43...♜a7, hindering the transfer of the queen to the fifth rank, as a better defensive try.

44 ♗h4! ♜d6 45 ♗xe7 ♜xe7 46  
 ♜c8+ ♖h7 47 ♜f8 ♜c7

After 47...♜xe2 48 ♜xf7 ♜e6 49  
 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 50 ♕f4 White has a winning ending. To avoid ♕g6 and ♜h8#, Black will have to trade rooks on d8, when the d4-pawn is doomed.

48 f4!

A painful move for Black to face. White mobilizes his kingside for the final attack and reminds his opponent how clever the king march was.

48...♗c5?

Hoping to negotiate an exchange of rooks, or evict the rook from f8, but there are tactical problems.

49 ♜d5 ♜e5 50 ♜xf7! 1-0

Now that you have seen a larger sampling of royal wanderings, perhaps you understand my great affection for the Schlechter-Lasker game. It has all the ingredients a king march can offer: the surprise and daring, the unbalancing of a position, and rarest of all, the monarch's active participation in the action. It even has an unhappy ending, to make it a truly

riveting story, and remind us of the real-life dangers.

### Another Cautionary Tale

Are there any drawbacks to studying patterns? Of course. Nothing's perfect. By identifying the dangers, we can try to make pattern training even more useful.

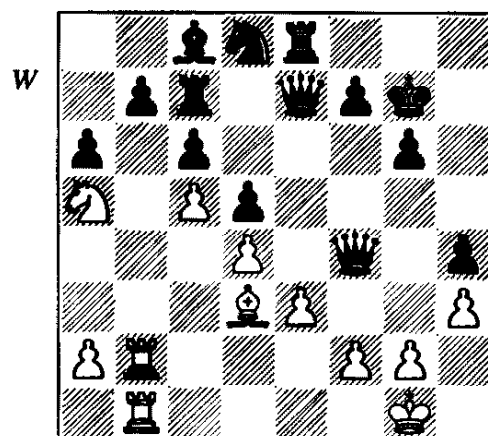
First, one cannot apply the general information from this kind of study blindly. There will be times when there may be better plans available. An apparently standard plan may have failings on account of minor changes in the details present in the exact position you have on the board. One good example of this was the trouble White got into in the game Mozny-Dumitrache given in the Minority Attack section above. Here a mechanical reproduction of standard manoeuvres proved to be ineffective when thoughtlessly applied.

Another risk is that the significance of a strategic pattern becomes exaggerated. These are not like tactical motifs, where an identification and execution can mean the speedy demolition of an opponent. Positional themes are often simply ways to proceed. They are more often guidelines to forming a more detailed plan, or ways to increase the pressure on the enemy.

The final drawback is that if one becomes overly reliant on trying to puzzle out positions by analogy, a lack of creativity results. One of the greatest challenges a player faces is finding ways to break rules successfully.

Seeing past the conventional wisdom and the safe, sensible path requires both knowledge of what is 'normal' and an understanding of what is possible.

There are several reasons why I find the next game fragment instructive. In the context of this chapter it shows the dangers that may await a player on the white side of the Exchange Queen's Gambit, as well as the perils of king-wandering. If you had seen this game without being exposed to some of the material in this chapter, you might find White's play rather mysterious. If you played through this game *after* studying some of the material in this chapter, you might be expecting White to win in impressive style. If you play through this game now, I would ask that you note the freshness of Black's play, and the unconventional course of a spirited struggle between two top players.



**L. Portisch – A. Yusupov**  
*Bugojno 1986*

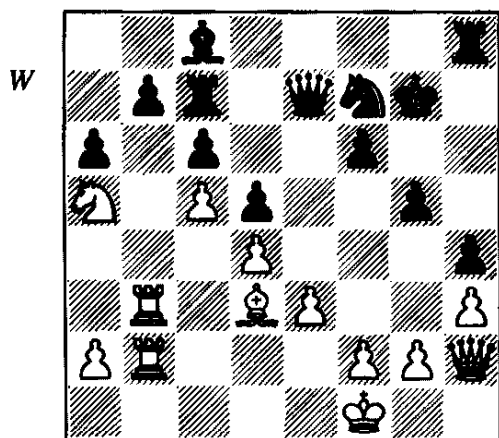
This position looks a bit unpleasant for Black. His pieces appear jumbled,

and restricted to defending a weakness on b7. Nevertheless, his position is also very solid. The weakness is adequately protected, and it is not at all simple for White to improve his position. The positive aspects of Black's set-up, and scope for improving it, are admirably demonstrated by Yusupov.

26 ♖f1 ♜h8 27 ♜b3 g5! 28 ♜h2

28 ♜d6 ♜h6 29 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 was suggested by Yusupov, and assessed as slightly better for White. I find it much easier to understand Portisch's reasoning. Cracking Black's shell without queens is going to be problematic, and surely if Black is advancing his kingside shelter, White should keep the queens on the board. What impresses me with this game is not just the originality of Black's play, but how easy it is to sympathize with White's decisions.

28...f6 29 ♜1b2 ♜f7! (D)



Black rules out the possibility of a queen exchange, and bolsters his king position.

30 ♖e1

In his notes, Yusupov consistently suggests that White should now bide

his time, and leave his king on the kingside. Again, with Black mobilizing to take action on the kingside, it appears very logical to evacuate the king, and try to exploit the eventual opening of lines on this flank.

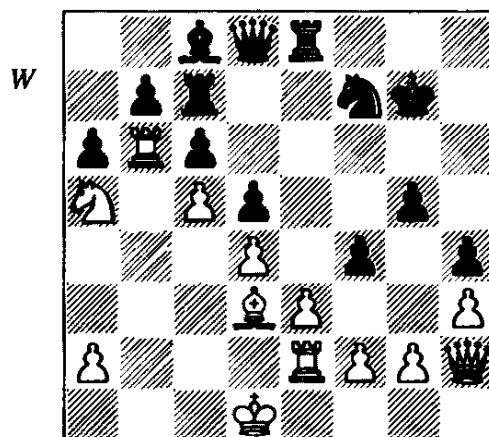
30...♜e8 31 ♖d1?!

31 ♖f1 f5 32 ♜b1 is Yusupov's prescription, preventing ...f4.

31...f5! 32 ♜e2 ♜d8 33 ♜b6?!

This move is designed to forestall a sudden unveiled attack on the a5-knight, but the rook on b6 is not gainfully employed. 33 ♜bb2 followed by ♜b3 looks more prudent.

33...f4! (D)



This move puts Black in control. White must now endure either lasting pressure against e3, or weaken his d4-pawn. What I find striking about the game from here is the unique reversal of royal roles on the kingside. White's queen is the recipient of a kingside pawn storm, mounted with a black king behind the advancing hordes!

34 exf4?!

It was better to suffer pressure on e3, though this would be uncomfortable after Black's planned ...♜f6 and

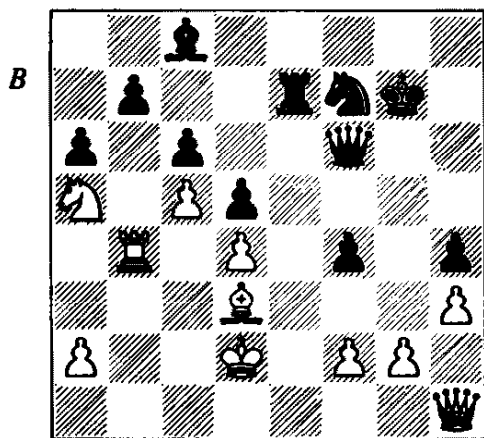
doubling of rooks on the e-file. White would also have to contend with the possibility of ...f4-f3, fracturing his kingside pawn structure. In time pressure, the temptation to expose Black's king at least a bit strikes me as very natural.

**34...♖xe2 35 ♔xe2 ♕f6 36 ♖b4**

Capturing on g5 fails to 37...♖e7+ followed by ...♕xd4, when White's king will be shredded.

**36...gxf4 37 ♔d2 ♖e7 38 ♕h1 (D)**

This position emphasizes the odd inversion of White's king and queen. What is at least as unusual is that Black's kingside attack proves just as efficient, despite the fact that it opens lines between his own king and the enemy queen.



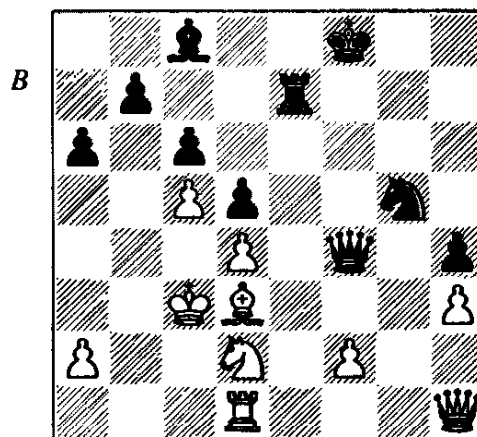
**38...f3! 39 ♔c3 ♕g5 40 gxf3 ♕f4!**

40...♕xh3 would be hasty, and allows 41 ♕xb7!.

**41 ♖b1 ♕xf3 42 ♕b3 ♔f8 43 ♖d1 ♕g5 44 ♕d2 (D)**

**44...♖f7!**

A fine, sophisticated, move. After this both of White's weak pawns come under increased pressure, and Black avoids the tempting continuations:

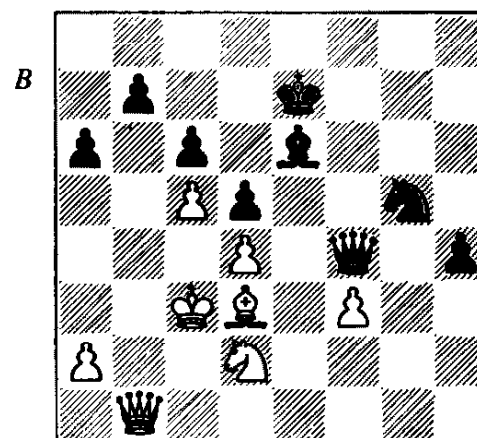


a) 44...♕xh3 45 ♖g1! ♕d7 46 ♖xg5! ♕xg5 47 ♕f3 and the white initiative with ♕h4 offers dangerous counterplay against the black king.

b) 44...♕xh3 45 ♕f3 when White can still pose technical problems.

Don't overlook the educational value of such side-variations. Yusupov's alertness to potential difficulties is the cornerstone of superior technique.

**45 f3 ♕xh3 46 ♖e1 ♕g5 47 ♖e2 ♖e7 48 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 49 ♕e1+ ♔e6 50 ♕b1 (D)**



White hopes to prolong resistance by forcing some of Black's pieces to tend to his king instead of helping the h-pawn to advance. In keeping with

the course of this game, the black king shows the absolute minimum respect necessary, and does not fear purely temporary distractions.

50...h3 51 ♖xb7+ ♔d7 52 ♗a8 h2 53 ♗h8 ♘h3 0-1

54 ♗g7+ ♔d8 55 ♗g2 ♘f2 and the h-pawn promotes.

This game should give you an indication of how much room there is for paradox in chess. I find this game noteworthy, not only for its illustration of how rich even apparently passive positions can be, but for the amazing reversal of roles involved in Black's kingside attack.

## Section 2: Tactical Patterns

*"The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implications of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, ... this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience."*  
– Henry James, *The Art of Fiction*.

Our first task in this section is to summarize well-known, fundamental, tactical patterns. Due to their forced nature, these themes are easily catalogued, and have been so in many earlier works. In order not to reproduce too much existing material, I will now refer the less experienced reader to Appendix 1 (mating patterns) and Appendix 2 (tactical patterns), where many of these themes are covered in relatively pure form. In Appendix 2 I have essentially devoted one example to each common motif, and tried to avoid any examples where there are a

combination of motifs involved in a tactical finish.

One disadvantage of the popular method of presenting a large selection of combinations purporting to illustrate a motif is that in practice *several* themes tend to blend together. While problem-solving is always beneficial, it is not the most efficient way to communicate the essence of the motif. I was extremely pleased to have an agreeable conversation with training guru Mark Dvoretsky on this topic. He feels very strongly that there is no need to be flooded with examples. Illustrate the point and then proceed to use this knowledge constructively. (I raise this issue for those who might feel that a breezy catalogue in the back of the book is somehow skirting the issue.) These appendices can also serve as a quick review and reference for those who have seen most of this before.

Once one has encountered recurrent tactical patterns, the next job is to root them deeply in one's chess subconscious. They should become virtually a reflex, freeing one to puzzle out the more original problems to be solved at the board. In this way, even if the theme is not readily obvious, its proximity to a current position should make its presence felt. It is this kind of learning, absorption, that is the basis of intuition.

In this chapter I will present material that I have tested on individual students and in group lectures. Besides providing pattern training, I often use these exercises to gauge a student's use of diagram projection,

discussed in Chapter 2, Blindfold Chess and Stepping-Stone Diagrams. We will be trying to apply the techniques discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, and seeing how the mixture works.

I have incorporated some of the 'stream of consciousness' produced by pupils solving the exercises. This may be of interest to trainers, and to measure the usefulness of techniques like diagram projection. Quieter students may find it enlightening to see how information is revealed from the verbal thought-process. I have, for better or worse, used my own games for some of the material, on the traditional grounds that they are the most familiar to me.

### **Analysing with the help of patterns, and diagram projection**

Each session contains three positions. The amount of time one should devote to them varies according to the level of the student body. I tend to set aside 15-20 minutes for the first position, 10-15 for the second and 1-3 for the third<sup>1</sup>. The reason for the time discrepancy should be obvious as you work through them. I ask that students record their thought-process as they analyse the positions, and stress (or beg) that they write down the verbal processes as well.

How terribly difficult it is to get students 'talking'! They tend to communicate in purely tactical variations if given a written assignment. Often it is necessary to 'grab' them and force them to solve verbally. When – or to be more honest, if – they finally do start talking, the results are dramatic. Not only do students tend to progress through a position more quickly, but the improvement is obvious to all because it can be heard as well. When someone talks his way through a position, and the revelation and satisfaction can be heard clearly in the voice, the effectiveness of the process communicates itself powerfully. I have spoken of the importance of coupling this abstract, verbal procedure with the very concrete act of calculating variations before, while discussing the legendary Tree of Analysis. I cannot stress it enough.

When each of the positions has been examined, work backwards (1, 2, 3, 2, 1) and spend a few minutes more on each of them. This is followed by an open discussion of the exercises, combining as many relevant methods – stepping-stone positions, clean calculation of variations, noting patterns as necessary for the student(s). If you wish to reproduce the normal working atmosphere, you can work on the following diagrams in that way.

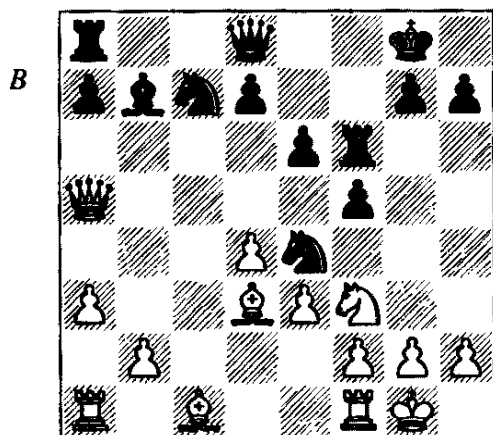
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1 From reading Dvoretsky, my impression is that the fabled 'Russian schoolboy' would be expected to write a dissertation on these positions in a fraction of that time. My own experience is that these times are challenging enough for most students. Ideally, one would aim to do such exercises more and more quickly, but like all things, this depends on practice.

The first series illustrates a very clearly related set of patterns.

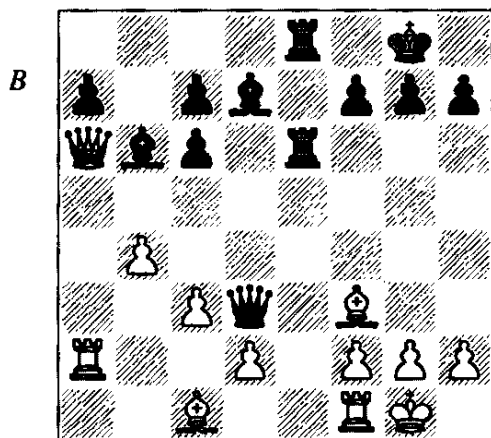
### Series 1

1)



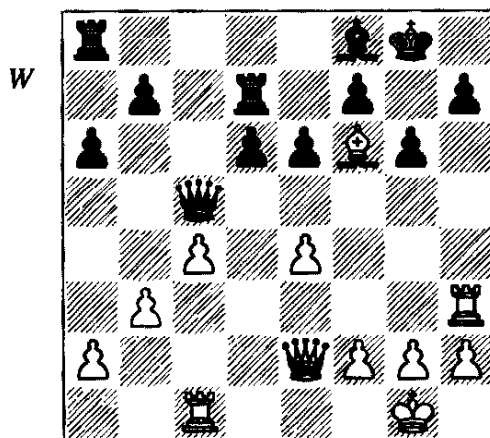
**B. Østenstad – J. Tisdall**  
Oslo 1994  
Black to play

2)



**L. Paulsen – P. Morphy**  
USA Ch Final (6) 1857  
Black to play

3)



**S. Arkhipov – Kuznetsov**  
USSR 1980  
White to play

Hopefully the positions decreased in difficulty. There is a potential problem here in that the second position is so famous that it may be known rather than solved. Sadly, I find that this is not so often the case. The classics are growing ever more neglected. I am also not so sure that the final position was clearly simpler. Nevertheless, the similar patterns in the final two diagrams should set off an alarm. If there were difficulties coming to grips with position one, the next exercises should ease them. Then one could return to the more difficult positions and try to apply the pattern activated by the sequence of exercises.

Let us now go through the positions in ascending order of difficulty. We will discuss the relevant features of the patterns, and also try to determine a sensible process of thought to apply in this and similar situations.

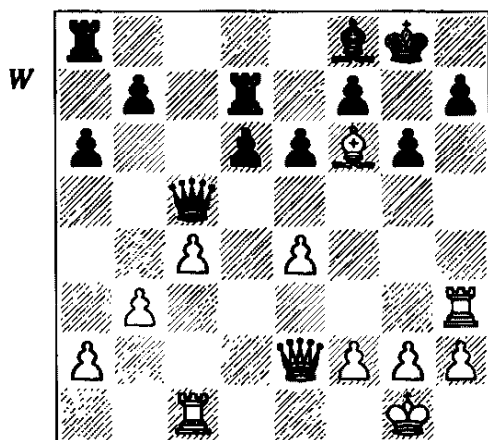


## Finding the path

*"The opportunity that fits the act. The occasion for an attack. The understanding of the weakness." – Taisen Deshimaru, The Zen Way to the Martial Arts (translated by Nancy Amphoux, Arkana Books 1991)*

You never know where you are going to find apt material. The above quote fits perfectly into a discussion of tactics and combinations. Tactical blows do not appear out of thin air. They arise from inherent problems in a position. A combination exploits and punishes these frailties.

3)



S. Arkhipov – S. Kuznetsov  
USSR 1980

In the position above, the weakened complex of dark squares around the black king, combined with the proximity of White's heavy artillery, should cause a sharpening of attention. Basic patterns that lead to the solution of this problem are: Morphy's mate, its close

relation the Pillsbury, and mates on the h-file (see Appendix 1). The latter may not be immediately obvious, since White may have to reach the standard h-file mating net via the g-file. First the solution:

1 b4! ♖xb4 2 ♜h5! gxh5 3 ♖g3+ ♗g7 4 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 5 ♖xh7 1-0

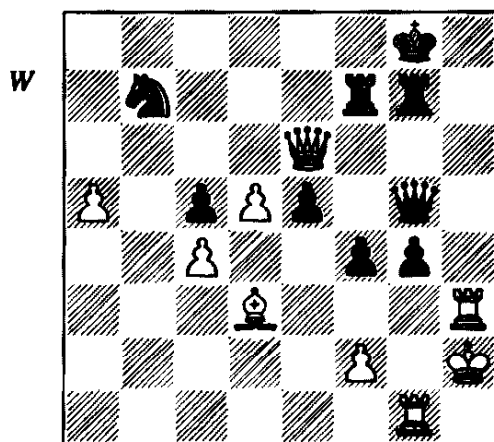
Now a look at the ingredients. The final position depicts a typical h-file execution. If Black had chosen to go to h8 on move four, then the retreat of the white rook would result in the Morphy/Pillsbury finish. That position should be in everyone's basic repertoire, and should act as a beacon when analysing this example.

If Black had tried 2...h6 we get a familiar picture after 3 ♜xh6!. Finally, White introduces the whole mating sequence with a preliminary tactic, a *deflection* sacrifice. His first move gains access to the h5-square so that the whole sequence can be set in motion. All of these tools can be found in the appendices, and should, eventually, be readily available at one's fingertips as well. This example is worth adding to the notebook as it illustrates a common mating picture which is based in turn on several elementary patterns. Note that the presence of a black piece on d7 is essential. With access to the d7-square Black's king could leg it to safety via e8 in the final position.

Was this combination difficult? If you have a reasonable selection of basic tactical components it shouldn't be, at least not very. It is only necessary that one of the mating patterns beckons. Then an active search can begin.

Often, it is precisely this desire to *make* a position occur that acts as the spark for a combinational solution. When the situation is right, the raw materials for a combination are present. First, you need a decent selection of tools. Then, with the right outlook, you can often 'build' a combination. Here a picture is needed:

### 'Constructing' a combination



**Johansson – Rey**  
1935

I *hope* that this is a simple combination. I am *sure* that this is how it is solved: White is attacking and his eye is naturally drawn to forcing continuations. So, he looks at 1 ♖e8+ ♜f8. We're so near the king, let's play the most violent move again – a deflection sacrifice to harass him further. 2 ♜h8+ ♔xh8 3 ♜xf8+ ♜g8. Here White pauses. There has been essentially no effort expended since the sequence examined is completely forced. Hmmm. Nothing here, not even a sensible check. Shall we toss the variation out the window and begin again?

I hope not. We have come this far largely because of the attraction of forcing lines. Another reason is that we have a great deal of firepower around the enemy king and sense that he should be in danger. Most importantly, we should make a helpful assessment of the final position in our first attempt to find a continuation. A quick look should cause us to remark that 4 ♜h6 would be mate if Black's queen were not there. (We should have seen the snapshot: black king on h8 and rook on g8 vs white queen h6 – mate – at some point in our experience. If not, a king in the corner with a rook on its shoulder is terribly restricted...)

At this point we get the urge to *construct* a desired position. I want to make a lot of forcing moves and deliver mate on h6. To do this I need to shift the black queen. Alternatively, we can deduce that Black's queen is bound to the defence of h6 and try to exploit her weighty duty as thoroughly as possible. Either way of looking at the conclusion should set us off on a very specific search. Now the right first move should occur in a nanosecond, even if one has never heard of deflection on a chessboard.

1 ♜xg4!

Black can only weep. White removes one of the few enemy trumps, brings his only malingerer into the attack *and* deflects the black queen from h6.

1... ♜xg4

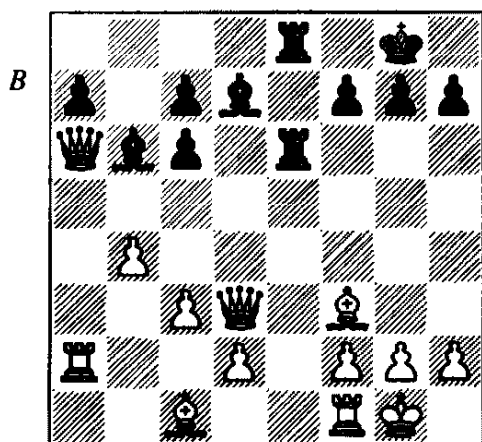
Alternatives are no less gruesome: 1... ♜e7 2 ♜xg7+ ♔xg7 3 ♜h6+ or 1... ♜f6 2 ♜e8+ ♜f8 3 ♜h7+ ♔h8 4

♙f5+ ♖g8 5 ♙e6+. After the choice in the game, we know the result.

2 ♛e8+ ♜f8 3 ♜h8+ ♚xh8 4 ♛xf8+ ♜g8 5 ♛h6#

The concept of constructing a combination is, I think, very important, and I will be pointing it out again from time to time. Now, back to the originally scheduled series.

2)

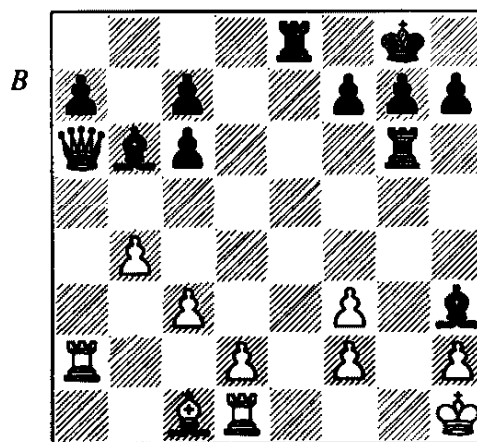


L. Paulsen – P. Morphy  
USA Ch Final (6) 1857

The pattern behind this should be fairly evident. The co-operation of the rook and bishop in attack leads to the same mating motifs as the previous example. Not surprising, with Morphy himself involved. This game is one of his attacking classics. Although the main line begs to be played, the variations should be calculated precisely. In a real game a queen sacrifice should be backed up with some concrete evidence. Note that I did not say Black to play and win, just Black to play. He does win here, but next time, who knows?

17... ♛xf3 18 gxf3 ♜g6+ 19 ♚h1 ♙h3 20 ♜d1 (D)

Here one had to do the most critical analysis. 20 ♛d3 (intending to cloud the issue by a timely counter-sacrifice on g6) 20...f5 21 ♛c4+ ♚f8! should have been noted during the pre-sacrifice calculations. Alternatives lead to quick mates, but that doesn't mean that there are no defences that need real scrutiny.



20... ♙g2+ 21 ♚g1 ♙xf3+ 22 ♚f1 ♙g2+?!

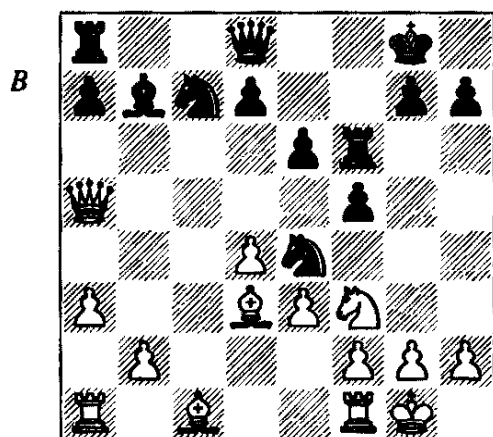
Strangely, Morphy did not find the most efficient finish: 22... ♜g2!, leading to the same mate as the previous exercise. That may be why the mating patterns with the king in the corner bear Morphy's name, but not those with a fleeing king being mated on the h-file.

23 ♚g1 ♙h3+ 24 ♚h1 ♙xf2 25 ♛f1 ♙xf1 26 ♜xf1 ♜e2 27 ♜a1 ♜h6 28 d4 ♙e3 0-1

This was a straightforward example. The solution required that the pattern be identified, and that the sub-variations be conscientiously examined. And now, we turn at last to the

first. The first position was by far the most complicated, and does not have a solution in the usual sense of the word.

1)



B. Østenstad – J. Tisdall  
Oslo 1994

Let's work our way through this by keeping some attention focused on the general contours of the position. There is clearly some trouble brewing for the white king, who has sensitive spots on g2 and h2. His last move was the rather clever 15 ♖a4-a5. This puts the queen within reach of a good defensive circuit, via c7 or e5, back to the kingside.

15... ♖c5!

Black unveils the long diagonal in the most energetic way, simultaneously threatening a fork on b3.

15... ♜g6!? is a serious alternative. Non-decisive examples have this habit of being troublesome, since there are always occasions where one can find a legitimately tempting branch. Let's have a closer look at this possibility,

which has a precise tactical line that can help us to assess it. In reply 16 ♖e1! appears to be best, since g2 is in sore need of protection. Now it is not clear how Black can step up his attack. White's queen is magnificently placed for defence, eyeing c7, e5 and the fifth rank. A tempting combinational possibility, 16... ♖d2 17 ♜xd2 ♜xg2 18 ♖xg2 ♜g5, is refuted by 19 ♜e4!, once again demonstrating the strength of the earlier defensive manoeuvre ♜a5.

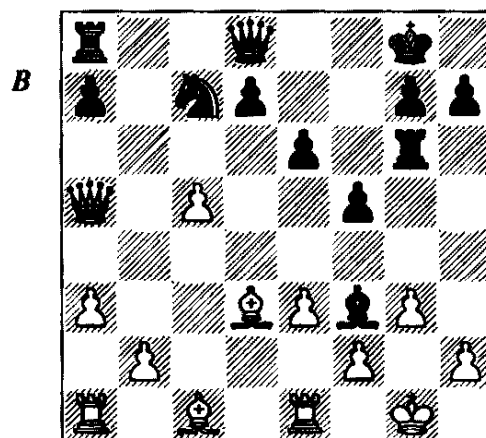
16 dxc5!

This seems to be the best defence. As soon becomes clear, the white queen needs the use of the fourth rank to repel the first wave of the attack.

16... ♜xf3 17 ♜e1

17 gxf3?? is not an option since White is simply mated after 17... ♜g6+ 18 ♜h1 ♜g5.

17... ♜g6 18 g3 (D)



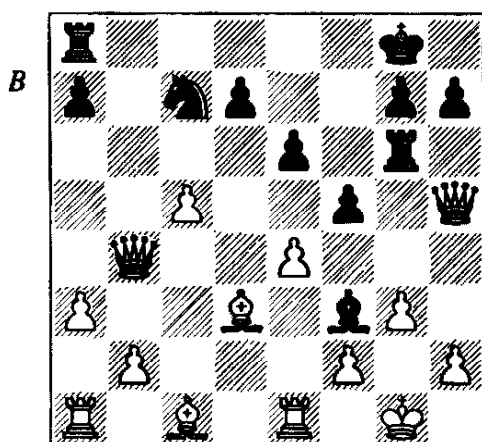
18... ♜h4 19 ♜b4!

The best move. Black threatened 19... ♜xh2+!, mating. If 19 ♜f1, then 19... ♜h6!!. This is easy to spot once one has the Arkhipov game clearly in mind. During the game, however, it

took a while for this pattern to register with me. For some reason, I found it harder to see the transfer of the rook as the combinatorial move than the direct sacrifice of the queen ( $\text{Qh5!}$  in the Arkhipov game). I don't know why – probably because  $\dots\text{Rh6!}$  is a much quieter way of sacrificing the queen, and we are often more attuned to the violent continuations in such situations. The line continues  $20\text{ gxf4}$  ( $20\text{ h3 Qxh3!}$ )  $20\dots\text{Rg6+}$  (another psychological factor that makes it harder to spot the tactical sequence here is that Black's rook must hop back and forth, g6 to h6 in order to gain access to g6; this is so strongly associated with loss of time that linking it to a queen sacrifice takes some effort)  $21\text{ Kg2 Rxf2+}$   $22\text{ Qf1 Rxf2}$  mates. In this example, d2 is not blocked, but since e1 is, the effect is the same and the white king cannot escape.

There are some other nice variations:  $19\text{ e4 f4}$   $20\text{ Qxf4 Qxf4}$   $21\text{ e5 Qh4!}$   $22\text{ Qxg6}$  (or  $22\text{ Qxc7 Qxh2+!}$ )  $22\dots\text{Qh3}$ .

**19...Qh5 20 e4 (D)**



**20...f4?!**

Ambitious but not entirely correct. More sensible was  $20\dots\text{fxe4}$   $21\text{ Qxe4 Qxe4}$   $22\text{ Rxe4 Qxc5}$  is fine for Black)  $22\dots\text{Qd5}$  with very good compensation for the pawn. Black's forces are terribly active, he has long-term command of the light squares, and continuing pressure against the white king. There was no forced win in the initial position, just a promising method of attack. I will go through the finish of the game as well. The game illustrates a lot of nice ideas, both tactical and strategic. The weaknesses on the light squares around White's king eventually play a decisive role.

Now, with both players already short of time, play becomes a bit more primitive. In any case, the refutation of Black's move is not at all transparent.

**21 Qxf4 Rf8 22 Qd2**

$22\text{ Qxc7?? Qxh2+!}$ , mating, should be a very familiar face by now.

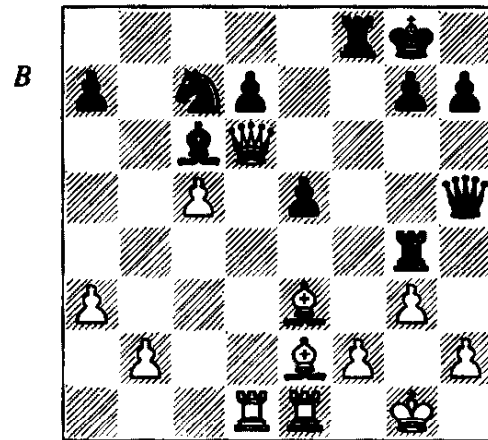
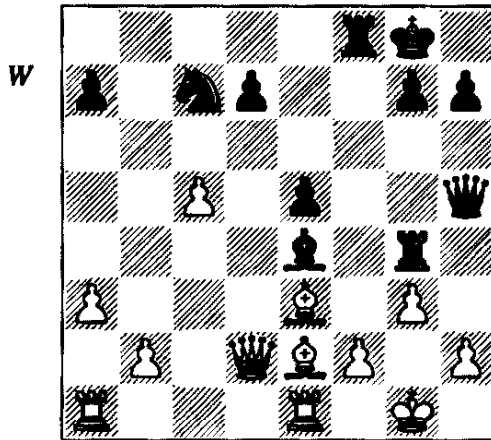
**22...e5 23 Qe3 Rg4!**

The most principled continuation – Black is willing to part with the exchange in order to preserve his dangerous bishop. The game now becomes a strategic duel. Whoever can resolve the struggle for the light squares around the white king in his favour will gain the upper hand.

**24 Qe2 Qxe4 (D)**

**25 Rad1?**

$25\text{ c6!}$  returns the material, but the scope of White's dark-squared bishop and his rooks is noticeably increased. He gains a clear advantage, planning  $25\dots\text{Qxc6}$   $26\text{ Rac1!}$ , when White will sacrifice the exchange for the powerful



c6-bishop and then regain the material on g4 with the better game. That kind of logical, pragmatic idea is often the bitter reward for pursuing attack and romance. (Sigh.)

Nevertheless, I have to admit that there is also an aesthetically pleasing element to this positional clearance sacrifice, and the ruthless elimination of Black's monster of a light-squared bishop. Luckily for me, the clock prevented White from thinking at a leisurely pace. In the post-mortem my strategically minded opponent spotted these ideas very quickly.

Greed is still inadvisable: 25 ♖xd7? ♖h3 26 ♙f1 ♜xg3+! is a knock-out (the old backward diagonal trick) and 25 ♙xg4 ♖xg4 is much too dangerous for White on the light squares.

**25...♙c6!**

I fear I digress yet again, but I can't help being reminded of a shogi proverb here: *the enemy's vital point is your own*. (See also Hansen-Hartman, White's move h3.)

**26 ♖d6? (D)**

**26...♖h3!**

This blunt threat of mate on g2 proves impossible to meet. Finally the

battle for the light squares on the king-side ends, and the game ends with it.

**27 f3**

27 ♙f1 ♜xg3+! 28 fxg3 (28 hxg3 ♖h1#) 28...♜xf1+! 29 ♜xf1 ♖g2#.

**27...♜xf3! 28 ♙xf3 ♙xf3 0-1**

White resigned in view of a falling flag and the line 29 ♜d2 (29 ♖d2 meets with the same finish) 29...♜xg3+ 30 hxg3 ♖h1+ 31 ♙f2 ♖g2#.

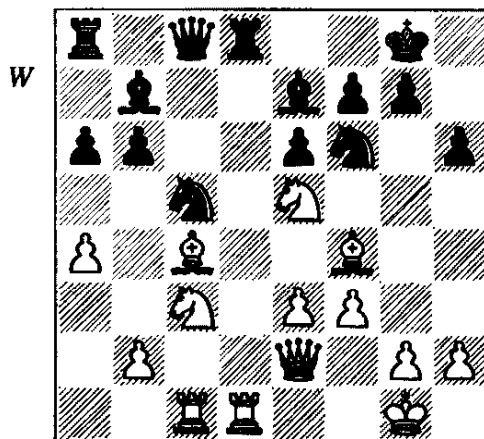
I realize I am probably biased, but I think this was an entertaining and instructive game. The initial tactical sequence was undoubtedly sparked by experience based on acquired patterns. The result was not a tactical knockout, but a complex battle with primarily strategic overtones. White missed a very pleasing way to turn this strategic duel in his favour, whereupon the tactical motifs resurfaced with decisive effect. With apologies to my opponent, we move on to the second set of triplets.

## Series 2

Approach the following positions in the same way as the first set. The general theme here is less focused than in

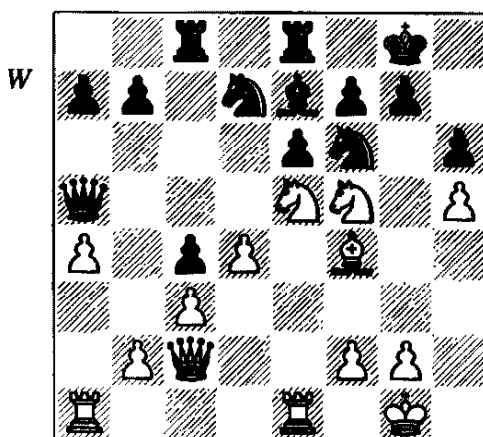
the previous series. This is intentional! To compensate for this, there is a clearer drop in difficulty from example to example. It will be even more important this time to couple one's inner dialogue to the calculation of variations.

1)



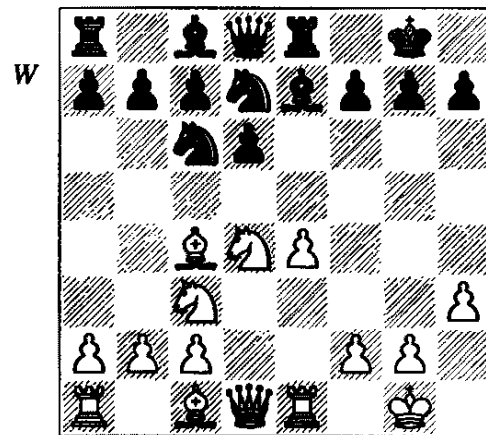
**J. Tisdall – B. Østenstad**  
*Gausdal Masters 1993*  
 White to play

2)



**N. Gaprindashvili – J. Nikolac**  
*Wijk aan Zee 1979*  
 White to play

3)



**W. von Holzhausen – S. Tarrasch**  
*Berlin 1912*  
 White to play

OK, I'm positive that this last position was the easiest, and fairly sure that it wasn't difficult.

The first warning signal that there is something seriously wrong with Black's position is the frailty of f7. From our first chess steps we know about the gravity of a weakness on this square. If we did not notice it ourselves, the arrival of an early checkmate here taught a traumatic but useful lesson. When you combine this atavistic memory with Black's cramped position, and the smothered state of his queen, you should hear the position crying out for you to strike. Listen to that cry ...

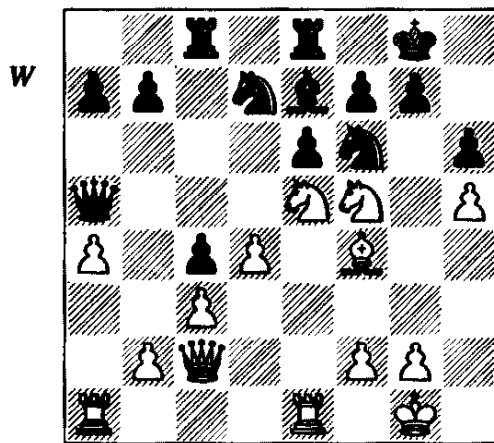
The principal element of the combination is the magnetic attraction of the decoying motif. The black king is obliged to walk the plank, and approach the enemy forces. Not surprisingly, this results in a gruesome finish.

1 ♔xf7+

This was enough to compel the distinguished Dr Tarrasch to resign. After 1...♙xf7, 2 ♖e6! ♙xe6 3 ♚d5+ ♙f6 4 ♚f5 is mate.

The chances of a king surviving in such wide open spaces are virtually nil. This combination of destruction and attraction, flushing out and then reeling in the enemy king, is worth remembering. Here it was very much like shooting fish in a barrel, but the idea will come in handy even when faced with more formidable tasks.

In fact, as soon as you saw this example, your mind went back to the first two. Didn't it? I hope so. Let's turn back to the second position of the series.



**N. Gaprindashvili – J. Nikolac**

*Wijk aan Zee 1979*

White to play

I will present a 'normal', fairly successful, thought-process. This process is a kind of synthesis of various students and groups who have tackled this series. Hopefully, you will have similar material if you tried to record your efforts to solve this.

Not only will this allow us to map how some players solve these examples, it will also provide us with other types of intriguing raw material. Again, verbal commentary accompanying variation calculation works best for students. If they ever start talking. But there are always ways to get people to talk...

By occasionally prodding them (not literally, in case you are beginning to have doubts) to use the stepping-stone technique, the student travels closer to the solution. The final steps are, hopefully, surrounded by less fog.

On the first visit to the position, a typical examination went something like this:

*"Ah, this is easy, first ♖xf7, then ♖xh6+, and ♚g6(+)." After a slight pause, objectivity rears its unwelcome head.*

*"No, wait, 1...♚xf5 ruins my plans."* Now comes a bit of checking, and it becomes clear that the desired forcing sequence does not apply here. White is still in violent mode though, and attention turns to another 'exposure' sacrifice.

*"1 ♖xg7 ... doesn't look particularly promising. But maybe 1 ♖xh6 is most effective."* Here again a tactical silence tends to descend, with variations like 1 ♖xh6!? exf5 2 ♚xf5 gxh6 3 ♚e3 going under the microscope.

Let's try to understand what is happening here. The student shows familiarity with the typical decoying motif, and tries to employ it at once on a classical constellation beginning



with a blow on f7. As the work of calculating begins, White notices that the tempting sacrifice that drew his eye really just doesn't work. Of course, this may take time, as first temptations are often hard to reject. The desire to strip the enemy king bare and begin the attack persists, and various methods of doing this are examined. Students who talk most to themselves tend to accumulate evidence more quickly. There are many ingredients for a successful solution. The destructive sacrifices on f7, g7, h6, as well as the attempt to bring the e1-rook into play must be noted. It is also interesting to note how distracting an influence the sacrifice on f7 has.

Round 2 (after working on 1, 2, and 3 in sequence): During the reappraisal of the exercise positions I often prompt the student to refocus the position if I notice any recurring difficulties. In this particular example, common problems involve Black's ability to use the fifth rank fading in and out of 'view'. Presumably this is because of the wall of white knights on the fifth rank in the initial position.

On the second pass, the sense of needing to decoy the king out is often strengthened, and if the initial distraction of the f7 sacrifice can be set aside, the analogous sequence finally gets sufficient attention: 1 ♖xg7, 2 ♗xh6+ ... Now if White notices the strength of 3 ♖xf7+ the solution advances rapidly. Often however, a move like 3 ♛d2+(?) comes to mind instead, in combination with lifting the rook to

e3-g3. I think this happens because for many players part of their brain tends to shut out the f7-square since it was a false trail earlier. In any case, this tends to be a brief distraction, and noting the mobility of the white rook contributes a missing piece to the puzzle. Once the f7-square re-enters the field of vision, we pick up speed.

1 ♖xg7!

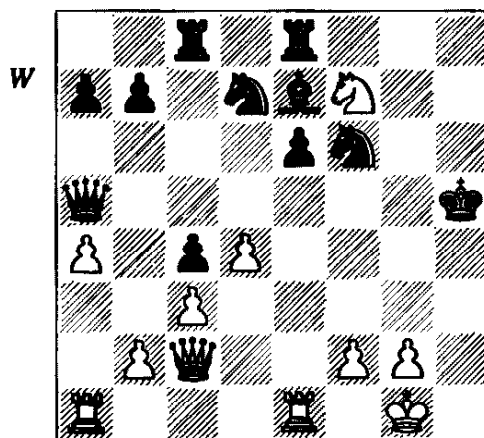
1 ♖xf7? ♛xf5.

1...♗xg7 2 ♗xh6+! ♗xh6

If 2...♗g8, 3 ♖e3 gives White a decisive attack. This prosaic variation should also help keep the white rook active in the mind's eye.

3 ♖xf7+ ♗xh5 (D)

3...♗g7 must be examined, as it is in many respects a more natural move. However the king is even more cornered if he retreats. 4 ♛g6+ ♗f8 5 ♖g5 (or 5 ♖e5 ♖xe5 6 ♖xe5 ♛xe5 7 dxe5) wins for White. It should be noted that 5 ♖h6 allows the black queen to swing into defence via h5. Some students with a fifth-rank problem tend to overlook this.



Now is a good time to use a stepping-stone diagram, because we can

determine that 3...♔xh5 is forced. Here a popular inaccuracy is 4 ♖e3. If the student brings this position (after Black's third move) into sharper focus, this tends to correct the recurring peripheral blindness, and the option of 4...♚f5 in reply appears. This possibility causes enough mess that a neater solution is sought. With this position more clearly in mind, the most effective finish tends to surface.

**4 g4+!**

A decoying and deflection tactic.

**4...♔h4**

If 4...♖xg4, 5 ♚h7+ shows the deflection element of the previous move. 4...♔xg4 allows White to capitalize on both the deflection away from g6 and the decoying and further exposure of the king after 5 ♚g6+ ♔h4 6 ♔g2! ♚d5+ 7 f3.

**5 f3**

Secures the g4-square and opens the second rank for the white queen.

**5...♖xg4**

Other ways to guard the h2-square are also doomed to failure: 5...♚c7 6 ♖e5, and 5...♙d6 6 ♔g2, opening the way for traffic to the h-file, both lead to mating attacks.

**6 ♖e4**

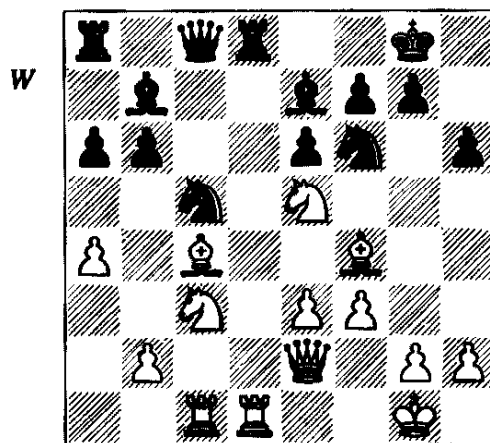
Pins and wins.

**1-0**

A straightforward king-hunt, and a good example of sacrifices designed to expose the enemy monarch. Sometimes there is more sport in the hunt, as we will see in the next position.

As in the previous set, the most difficult example does not quite fall into the category of 'soluble' positions.

1)



**J. Tisdall – B. Østenstad**  
*Gausdal Masters 1993*

Here again I present the progress of a typical student investigation. We use the same approach as in the previous exercise. First, I record the unprompted musings. Next come the thoughts as stimulated by the other two positions. Again, any time the solving shows signs of getting bogged down, I actively try to get the student to re-focus on the position being examined.

Common first reactions:

1) There is a possible pin on c-file, with the possibility of b4, and the white rook trained against the black queen. Hmmm, familiar weaknesses on f7/e6.

2) The first examinations of 19 b4 with ideas of sacrificing on f7.

3) ...♖xa4 never works... (This is an important detail. The fact that White's knight has the b6-square prevents this from being a defensive option.)

4) Often the immediate 19 ♖xf7 is assessed. Since this does not work, it can bog down the solving process.

5) b4 and then the sacrificial sequence ♖xf7 and ♗xe6+.

6) At some point the student notes that the interpolation of ...♙xd1+ must be considered. This in turn raises the possibility of ♖xd1-b3(+). Note that this gives Black the possibility of ...♗d5, since there is less white firepower on d5 and the c3-knight is pinned to the c1-rook. This introduces two important ingredients into the equation. Most important is the emergence of the queen on to the a2-g8 diagonal. Next, that the control of the d-file, and particularly the d5-square, forms a vital part of the white attack. This should begin to shift White's attention away from trying to exploit the c-file, which is only a distraction.

Round 2, after working through the other positions in the series:

If at this stage the student still fails to come to grips with the vital aspects of the position, I begin to prod and suggest using diagram projection, and suggesting a clearer analysis of the variations involving b4, ♖xf7 and ♗xe6+. The latter suggestion tends to be reserved until the student has tried to work out this sequence earlier, although with the focus of this set of exercises pointing at these squares, solvers usually are already engaged in this variation. Those who refocus their image of the variation almost immediately note the possibility of ♖e2-a2, an encouraging piece of evidence for the effectivity of the stepping-stone technique. Once this is achieved, the variation up to 24 ♖f7 snaps into focus immediately. There is often some

untidiness finishing off Black here (with his king on g6) but I can pardon that on the grounds of the reasonable assessment that the king 'must be doomed'. It would, after all, be unfair to criticize what is in effect sound intuition here, when intuition also played a part in the conduct of the game.

Now the student finally sets to work on the crux of the exercise, determining the consequences of:

19 b4! ♙xd1+ 20 ♙xd1 ♖cd7 21 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 22 ♗xe6+! ♖f8

This much is forced as 22...♗xe6 is strongly answered by 23 ♖a2+!. This point often goes unnoticed for a while, presumably since the possibility is a by-product created by the first move of the combination, and was not present in the start position. It is also slightly difficult to spot because an aggressive move that launches White's queen deep into the black kingside does not usually begin from such a distant base.

In fact, the clearance of the second rank for this manoeuvre is a vital point of b2-b4.

23...♖f5 24 ♖f7 can be calculated to a definite conclusion. I did so during the game, but as mentioned above, this is not *strictly* necessary. Still, working out some of the variations is desirable, to have some evidence to back up one's intuition:

a) 24...♖xc3 25 g4#.

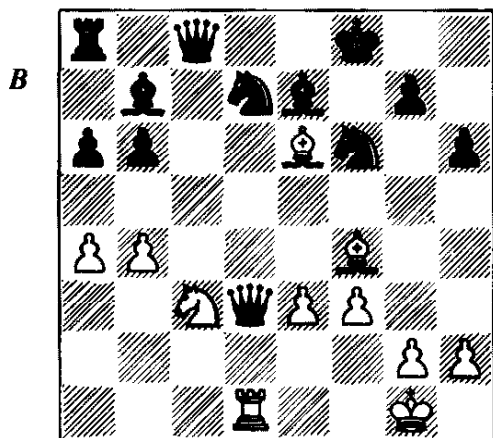
b) 24...h5 25 g4+ hxg4 26 fxg4+ ♖xg4 27 ♖g6+ ♖h4 (27...♖f3 28 ♖g2#) 28 ♖g5+ ♖h3 29 ♖g3#.

c) 24...♗xf3 25 gxf3 and ♙d5 is decisive.

Noting the threat in 'a', and having a glance at line 'c' are quite important, but the middle variation could be written off as too obvious to require working out to the end.

### 23 ♛d3 (D)

The action of the white queen on squares on the b1-h7 diagonal is a feature of all three test positions. A bit earlier in the game I had examined the reflex e3-e4, but rejected it, partly because it weakened d4. Then while calculating variations it became clear that it is essential to have the b1-h7 diagonal open for the queen later. The strength of the 'voice' warning me not to play e3-e4 helped to lay the groundwork of this combination at a much earlier stage of the game.



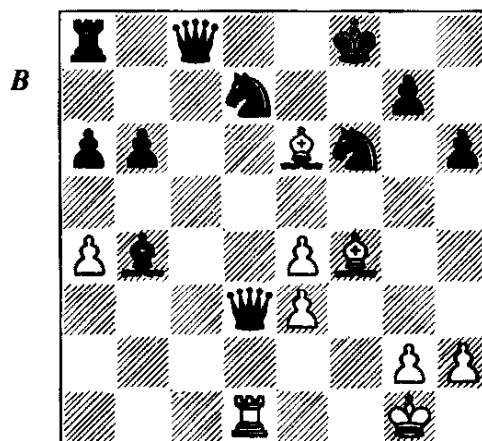
### 23...♙c6?

This move allows White to recoup his investment with interest.

By far the toughest defence here is 23...♙xb4!, intending to meet the obvious continuation 24 ♙d6+ ♙xd6 25 ♛xd6+ ♙e8 26 ♜e4 with 26...♛c6!, a variation I had noted during the game.

24 ♜e4! was the move which convinced me that the sacrifice should be

sound. I assessed the additional pressure gained by opening the f-file and an extra e-pawn in the attack to be sufficient. This is not exactly crystal clear, but it seems that White at least has excellent practical chances, and I do not see a fully adequate defence. After 24...♙xe4 25 fxe4 we have the following position (D):



a) 25...♛c5!? is a typically unpredictable computer defence offered up by Fritz. 26 ♙xd7 ♜d8 27 ♛f1!! is Fritz's equally clever response after longer thought, which tips the scales in White's favour. The point is that the bishop on d7 is now taboo because of a later discovered check on d6.

b) If Black plays the more natural defence 25...♙e8, he runs into 26 e5 ♜xe5 27 ♛f5 ♜ed7 28 ♛g6+ with a ferocious attack.

c) 25...♜a7 26 ♙d6+ ♙xd6 27 ♛xd6+ ♙e8 28 e5 guarantees White lasting superiority in an ending after:

c1) 28...♛c5 29 exf6.

c2) 28...♜e4 can at best reach a poor queen ending, since the knight on e4 is vulnerable to forking checks on b4, d4 or g6, for example 29 ♙xd7+

$\text{fxd7}$  (29... $\text{fxd7}$  30  $\text{fb8+}$ ) 30  $\text{fe6+}$   $\text{fd8}$  31  $\text{fxb6+}$   $\text{fc7}$  (31... $\text{fe8?}$  32  $\text{fe6+}$   $\text{fd8}$  33  $\text{fg8+}$  and more pawns fall; 31... $\text{fe7}$  32  $\text{fxd7+}$  and White picks up the knight next move with a check on the fourth rank; his king escapes checks to h3, and the game continues, in a promising queen ending) 32  $\text{fxd7+}$   $\text{fd7}$  33  $\text{fd4+}$ .

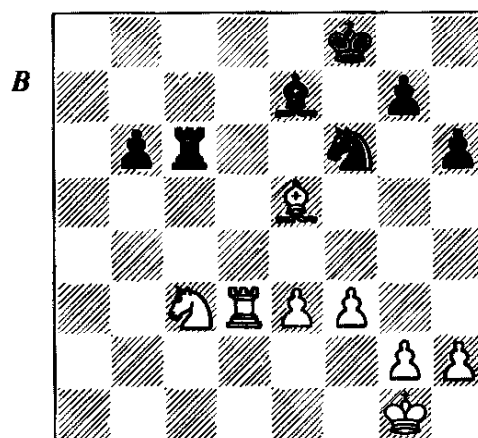
During the game I calculated only the lines with 25... $\text{fa7}$ , branch '1', and 25... $\text{fe8}$ , and was convinced of the sacrifice's soundness. Practical considerations then took over – Black has the bigger problems to solve, and extra thinking time for White will be necessary in the eventuality of inspired defence. Real sacrifices, which defy a sensible attempt to work out all variations, usually require a leap of faith, and a pragmatic approach. A stronger tactician might have found it easy enough to work out more of the lines, perhaps all, but I confess to trusting my experience and intuition here.

One should not overlook the psychological and practical effects of sacrifices. It is easy to forget how unsettling the heightened tension of a piece sacrifice can be. Also, the peculiarities of the opponent must be taken into account. My adversary has a strong strategic nature, and can become uncomfortable in intricate tactical combat, requiring much precise calculation. On the other hand, I have also experienced bitter setbacks against him when misjudging the positional

compensation behind a sacrifice<sup>1</sup>. Here, the sacrifice is concrete (and correct) enough to exploit his distaste for tactical defence.

The game concluded:

24  $\text{b5}$   $\text{axb5}$  25  $\text{axb5}$   $\text{dc5}$  26  $\text{axc8}$   $\text{xd3}$  27  $\text{fxd3}$   $\text{fxc8}$  28  $\text{bxc6}$   $\text{fxc6}$  29  $\text{ae5}$  (D)



This line also had to be taken into account when making the original sacrifice. In time pressure, Black, discouraged, does not offer maximum resistance.

29... $\text{cf7}$  30  $\text{cf2}$   $\text{ce6}$  31  $\text{ad4}$   $\text{ac5}$  32  $\text{db5}$   $\text{dd5?}$  33  $\text{axg7}$   $\text{axe3+}$  34  $\text{fxe3+}$  1-0

### Multiple patterns

The previous series of positions demonstrated some of the complications that can arise when we are strongly influenced by acquired patterns. They can point us in the right direction, but they can also lead us off the precise path. Sometimes, as in my games with Østenstad, a typical motif can simply

<sup>1</sup> The author has selfishly placed such examples beyond the scope of this book.

lead us to an attractive and complex position to play or solve.

Gaprindashvili-Nikolac illustrated more ambiguous help from patterns. The well-known series of magnetic sacrifices that occurred in the game might have been triggered by the simpler pattern we saw earlier. On the other hand, this pattern could also have misled a solver, since there was a false version of the more common version of this pattern present.

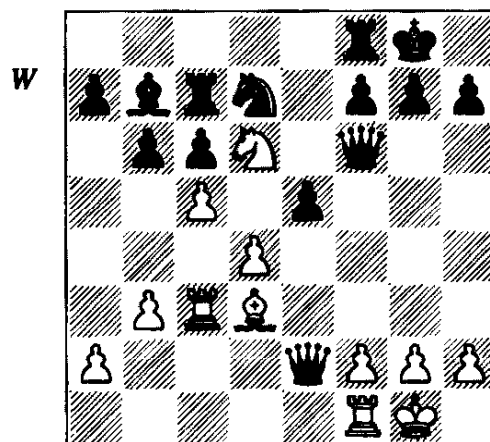
This ambiguity occurs often. Chess is not an easy game<sup>1</sup>. If you examine a sample of combinations in a quiz book or magazine column, and compare the solution to the neat catalogue of motifs found in Appendix 2, you will find that most tactical operations involve several themes, often operating at the same time.

This helps to explain why it is essential to have a wide arsenal of tactical motifs at one's disposal. Obviously it helps when the pattern itself can be used. More often, this knowledge serves as a sixth sense, alerting you when tactical possibilities exist beneath the surface. Sensitivity to tactical potential is one type of chess intuition. Since game positions do not come with printed warnings that one side can play and win, you need a finely developed tactical eye.

You must also learn to determine the most relevant motif in a position. Often there are so many tactical chords present, that your tactical ear must be honed as well.

Here are some examples of possible pattern confusion.

### A clear and simple case of confusion



Toth – Szigetti  
Reggio Emilia 1946

1 ♖xh7+

Of course this move really screams to be played. The ♖xh7+ sacrifice is one of the very first we encounter, and with so many other white pieces poised to join the attack, nothing else deserves consideration. For those absorbed in detail, one classical prerequisite of a successful sacrifice on h7 is a white pawn on e5. This often proves to be a vital feature for maintaining the attack when the king goes out to face the aggressors on g6. Here, however, since Black has no option of advancing, this rule of thumb need not apply.

1...♙xh7 2 ♜h3+ ♔g8 3 ♚h5 ♚h6

It is quite amazing to me how many students get bogged down here. One can almost see a kind of mental derailment, despite the relative simplicity of

1 Again, according to Miguel Najdorf's grandmother.

the combination. What is happening, I believe, is that it becomes clear that the preliminary pattern's normal components now clearly do not quite work here<sup>1</sup>, and independent thought now kicks in. Independent thought always takes time. The fact that a different pattern now applies often eludes solvers. Instead of having a stop and look around at the proper moment, they turn back, and assume that they were misled, seduced by overly obvious charms. Perhaps the initial influence of the first pattern overpowers clear thought. But if a strong desire to use the h-file persists, and the memory of another familiar image is awakened...

4 ♖f5! ♜xh5 5 ♖e7+

This is a variant of the other, more significant, pattern here, Anastasia's mate<sup>2</sup>. *Recognition is complicated by the fact that the decisive blow does not fall on h7 – the components of the pattern are not arranged in their usual order – another good argument for stressing the final mate image when presenting (tactical/mating) patterns.*

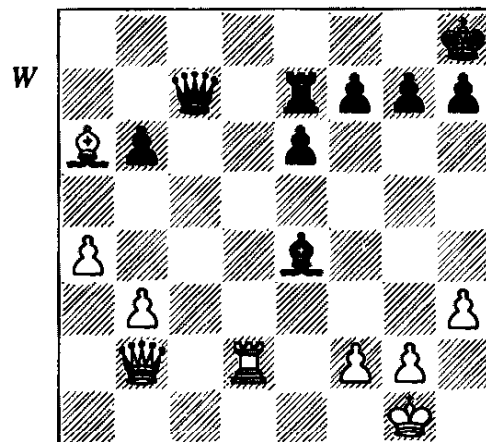
5...♙h7 6 ♜xh5#

This is the picture that we *should* have in our mental filing cabinet for Anastasia's mate. If this is the strongest image we have of it, then we are less dependent on the (usual) sequence of moves used to reach it. In

other words, the mechanics of arranging this mate are important, but far less so than the actual mating image, which we should retain.

I have used this fairly simple example on groups of promising juniors, with their tactical skills intact. An astonishing number fail to spot the finish in the allotted time, so strong is the effect of the first pattern, and the unusual sequence of the second. I stress this, since you may be able to avoid this kind of pitfall, just by being aware of it.

### The Power of Suggestion



V. Doroshkevich – V. Fedorov  
USSR 1981

Here there are strong signals prompting us to exploit the temporary weakness of Black's back rank.

1 ♜e5!?

1 In fact, the normal ♜xh7+ pattern involves a ♖g5+, followed by pressure against f7 as well as h7. Here we are dealing with brute force on the h-file. So, although the disruptive element of the bishop sacrifice is present, there are enough differences to cause the attacker to develop worries about the application of the pattern here.

2 See Appendix 1.

A good example of one move embodying several tactical themes. White attacks e4 and indirectly d8, and exploits the possibility of a back-rank mate by trying to deflect an overloaded piece. This array of ideas can have a depressing or mesmerising effect.

**1...♙d5**

This deals with the most obvious threats, but does not solve the root of Black's problems, his weak back rank. White exploits this theme ruthlessly.

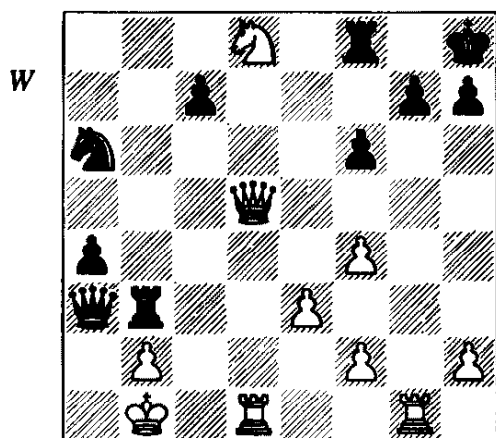
**2 ♖c2!! ♜d7**

2...♜xe5 3 ♖c8+; 2...♜xc2 3 ♜b8+; 2...♙c6 3 ♜c3! (not 3 ♖xc6?? ♜xc6 4 ♜b8+ ♖e8 as Black regains defensive control of the back rank) and White's pressure on the c-file wins material.

**3 ♖c8+ ♖e8 4 ♜c7! 1-0**

Black loses material. Full points if you noticed, as neither Black nor many annotators did, that 1...h6!, giving the king breathing space, would neatly sidestep White's threats. If 2 ♜xe4?, then 2...♜c1+ picks up the d2-rook.

### Multiple themes



**P. Dittmar – Karpachev**  
*Böblingen 1992*

**1 ♘f7+**

Did White's non-existent smothered mate confuse Black into allowing this position?

**1...♖xf7**

There is no weak back rank, and mate on b2 threatens...

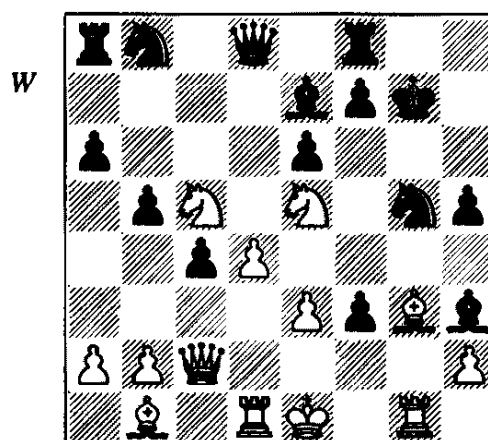
**2 ♜xb3!**

The themes here are deflection, destruction and exploitation of a weak back rank. This blow deflects the queen from defence of the last rank and removes the pinning piece.

**2...axb3 3 bxa3 ♖f8 4 ♖d7 1-0**

### Making dreams come true

Here is another position that combines several of the topics discussed in this section. Not only are there diverse tactical ideas present, but the idea of actively constructing a combination, to make a desired position occur, lies behind the solution.



**Lamparter – W. Fairhurst**  
*Australian Ch 1938*

Indisputably a position that fits the proverbial bill of being pregnant with



possibilities. Can you find your way through the wealth of tactical themes to a clear solution?

1 ♖c6!

Clearance of the e5-square. This sacrifice could also be seen as a way of expanding the dark-squared bishop's attacking range. One rational argument against it is that the sacrifice brings a defender of e5 into the game. The real idea behind it is to construct a double check, the most devastating way of hitting the enemy king. My guess is that one gets on the right track by wishing either to arrange a check on h7 by opening the g-file in a forceful manner, or to create a double check, by using e5 and the g-file. These ideas

interweave, and ... when a chance to land a knockout is present – and the amount of firepower trained on Black's draughty kingside indicates that it probably is – one should activate the imagination. *All manner of violent tries can be considered, and no price is too high to pay for the enemy king as a trophy.*

1... ♖xc6 2 ♔h7+!

A decoying sacrifice, to misplace the g5-knight and open the g-file. White is willing to consider this transaction since he knows the potential strength of a double check.

2... ♖xh7 3 ♕e5++

Double check.

3... ♔h6 4 ♕g7# (1-0)

## Chapter Summary

**A collection of recurring themes and patterns is the fundamental building block of intuition.**

**Well-armed players can often use these patterns to guide them through more unusual positions.**

**Well-known position types contain a wealth of sub-patterns that greatly enhance one's understanding of these common positions.**

**Patterns can be applied in different contexts. Be sure to weigh carefully how the elements of a known pattern are affected by the new environment.**

**When a combinational finish exists, a known tactical theme will probably act like a lighthouse beacon. In complicated tactical situations, there may be many signals, and the challenge will be determining the correct one.**

## 5 The Value of the Pieces

*"The best answer you can hope for is something vague like: 'It all depends on the position.' Anything else will be a half-truth or a lie!" – GM Nigel Davies in British Chess Magazine (No. 8/94).*

*"In Staunton's Handbook, page 34, it is stated that some scientists have calculated the approximate mathematical value to be as follows: taking the Pawn as the unit, the Knight is worth 3.05; the Bishop 3.50; the Rook 5.48, and the Queen 9.94. On this basis, which in the main is in accordance with our own experience and observations, we shall proceed to indicate ... some of the most important general principles of regulating the actions of the men which we believe are now mostly accepted by the strongest masters of the day..." - Wilhelm Steinitz, The Modern Chess Instructor, 1889*

No, no, put away your slide rules and pocket calculators. Steinitz's quote has always been a favourite of mine, if for no other reason than for its power to make me smile. Surely the scientists of Staunton's day had better things to do with their time?

Davies's answer is certainly more accurate, but it is far less instructive. There is a great deal of truth in the old equation. If you reckon various types of material imbalance using the Staunton scale, you will get a reliable rule of thumb (even if it is hard to imagine what to do with a superiority of 0.02 when having two rooks against a queen and pawn). It is only with a relatively large amount of experience that one begins to factor in the mysterious ingredients that allow one to judge when the formulaic approach is lacking.

One of the interesting aspects of shogi, Japanese chess, is that Davies's 'rule' is more or less law there. Trying

to get some numerical guidance in reckoning the value of the pieces from top shogi players cannot be extracted from the masters without (figuratively) resorting to physical threats. The reason for this is the quite different nature of that game. In shogi, captured pieces can be used by their new owner. The pieces are generally quite slow-moving, but gain an incredible enhancement in strength when they can suddenly descend from nowhere on to the board. Their values therefore actually change. Also, shogi is a game where the mating attack is the only form of endgame – there are no simplifications. This makes it much more dynamic, and harder to categorize than chess.

What this apparent digression can reveal to us is that the simple numerical guidelines to piece values in chess are most likely to be violated in extreme situations. These are most

Having more or less confessed that this topic cannot be broken down into fast rules, I will nevertheless try to shed some light on these problems with some concrete examples.

***“Modern chess is too much concerned with things like pawn structure. Forget it – checkmate ends the game.” – Nigel Short***

There are certainly players who can remember the near-hysterical worship they gave the queen in the early days of their development. The respect for the most powerful piece on the board

***“The Oedipus variation – sacrificing the king to win the queen.” – Jan Jotun***

**1 ♖xf5 gxf5 2 ♔g3!! ♜xc3+ 3 ♖h4 ♜f3**  
**3...♜c1 4 ♖h5.**  
**4 g6! ♜xf4+ 5 ♔g5 ♜e4**  
**5...♜xd4 6 ♖f6.**

6 ♖f6 ♗g8 7 ♜g7+ ♔h8 8 ♜xc7 ♜e8 9 ♗xf5 ♜e4 10 ♗f6 ♜f4+ 11 ♗e5 ♜g4 12 ♗g7+ ♗g8 13 ♜xa7 ♜g1 14 ♗xd5 1-0

For further illustration of this topic, see Chapter 4, Pattern Training (positional themes).

### Sacrificing for the Attack – Playing for the King

Raymond Keene broke with the tradition of excusing the inclusion of the author's own games on the grounds that they are the ones the writer knows best. He once gave his reason, with admirable directness, as 'vanity'. Here I will present two rather obscure efforts of my own, since I think it might be reassuring for the reader to see that I have some idea of what I am talking about. Vanity? Well, I wouldn't like these games to be completely overlooked...

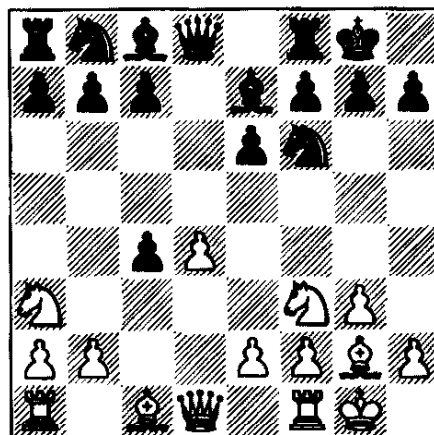
I will try to provide the advantages of a behind-the-scenes look at a game. Hopefully you will get a sense for how the abstract components of a position help a player to make assessments, and the role psychology plays in games of this type.

**J. Tisdall – S. Agdestein**  
*Oslo 1995*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 d5 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 dxc4 7 ♘a3!? (D)

A very double-edged gambit continuation, which I had fairly recently faced as Black. After a painful loss to Hodgson in this line I thought I would

B



try it out from the other side of the board. There is also a psychological declaration here.

There is a great risk being taken here, not just in an objective sense (that is a real pawn being pitched overboard), but also taking my opponent into mind. Agdestein is a gritty defender, and loves grabbing material, when his inventive style often allows him to demonstrate the dynamic resources hidden in apparently unpleasant positions. We had met many times before, and he had tremendous results against me. The pattern of previous games would usually involve the victory of dubious defensive risks in some kind of tense time-scramble. When this game was played, I was enjoying the greatest run of success in my career. With this in mind, I wanted to get our traditional build-up of the game out of the way. With this variation I was essentially saying that I was fearless, and wanted to skip our preliminary skirmishing and get right to the hand-to-hand combat. This is of course a potentially foolish approach, and I realized that Agdestein would be pleased to be given an unbalanced

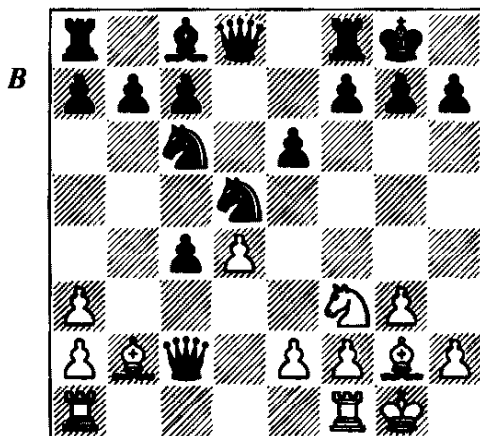
situation where he had a pawn in hand. The moral, at least on this day, was that one's own state of mind can sometimes be the most important factor.

7...♙xa3 8 bxa3 ♘c6 9 ♙b2 ♘d5!?

9...♞b8 is more normal. Agdestein's provocative move hopes to reach a similar position without having to invest a move safeguarding his rook.

10 ♛c2?! (D)

The direct approach was probably better: 10 e4!? ♘b6 11 ♛c2 and Black's idea of using the open e8-a4 diagonal does not appear to be completely correct: 11...♙d7 12 ♞ad1!? and now the consistent 12...♙a5 fails to 13 d5 exd5 14 exd5 ♙a4 15 ♛c3 ♛f6 16 ♛b4 and White's advantage is obvious.



10...b5 11 e4 ♘b6 12 ♞ad1 ♛e7!?  
13 d5 ♘d8 14 ♞fe1

Now that the contours of the midgame are more or less clear, an assessment of the position is in order. Black has his extra pawn, and White is not going to regain it in the near future.

White has an obvious amount of compensation, but I cannot declare exactly what these factors are worth. We can have a look at the ingredients of the position.

First the positive forms of compensation are a clear advantage in space, particularly in the centre. The d5-pawn prevents Black from finding comfortable posts for the minor pieces on the back rank, and so also prevents Black from the usual harmony of being able to connect his rooks. White has the bishop pair, and classically developed rooks, all of which are perfectly placed for when the position becomes more open.

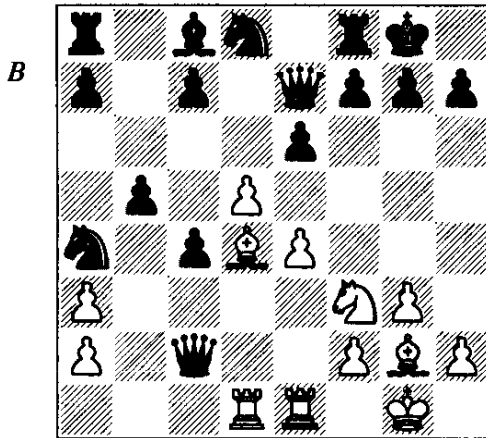
Black has an extra pawn, and a fairly central one at that, which, as Lasker said<sup>1</sup>, is almost always worth taking. It is, however, a doubled pawn, which lessens its value and the ability to set his pawn majority in motion. White's queenside pawn structure is compromised, but as usual, this also brings compensatory factors with it. Here, the long a1-h8 diagonal is more accessible, and the b-file may be useful. The a-pawns don't perform any active task themselves, but they are ready to eliminate their counterparts in the event of a black pawn advance.

This gives us a rough idea of our strengths and how the further course of the game can evolve. Absolutely nothing has been determined yet. White's pieces are well placed for combat, but there is no guarantee the position will become open soon. The

1 See Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice.

long dark-squared diagonal is attractive, but there are no targets there yet either. White's queenside pawns hold back Black's for now, but they are also vulnerable. Black has no development, but that can be slowly remedied.

14...♖a4 15 ♔d4 (D)



A very murky position has arisen. Black does not have any easy way to show the value of his extra pawn, but White also has no clear way to demonstrate that he has positive compensation. Both sides must be prepared to go slowly forward on those parts of the board where they stand best. Now Agdestein takes a typically risky decision.

15...♔xa3?!

This is a remarkable move. It has the advantage of forcing White's hand, and raising the stakes. At the time, I was reasonably satisfied with my compensation in any event, because Black's pieces are passively and randomly placed. Agdestein was equally pleased, since he was a pawn up, his position was reasonably solid, and sooner or later White will have to prove something. Many players who

are skilful in defensive situations have a fine sense for the potential in a position.

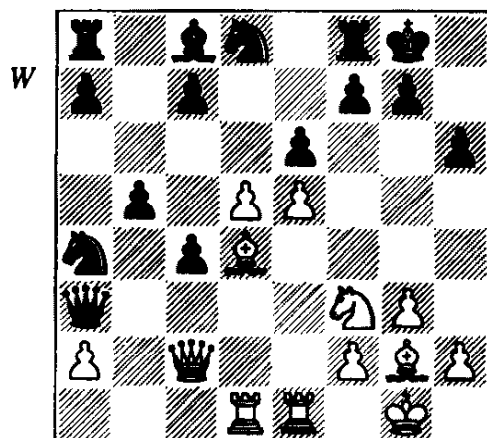
Behind Agdestein's assessment is the feeling that Black's position can be steadily improved, while White's has already used up much of its energy. This may well be, and the way to try to prove it was 15...f6! when Black can keep the position closed and slowly unravel his pieces. As White's most tempting continuation, 16 e5 f5 17 d6 doesn't amount to too much after 17...♗d7, he may have to find a more patient plan.

This idea is also in keeping with our earlier checklist of the dynamic features of the position. The move 15...f6 keeps central files closed, the long diagonal closed and opens the f7-square. This square comes in very handy, since the knight on d8 needs a post, while the bishop can go to b7, and Black's position moves much closer to harmony. White can try to make something of his d-pawn, or prepare a storm on the kingside, and he might succeed, but the most one can say is that the sacrifice has resulted in complications. 15...f6 would have gone a long way towards justifying the odd and original defensive set-up adopted by Black.

After embarking on a policy of greed, however, Black loses control of the game, since White can now open the position more or less at will. This may prove to be costly for White, but I tend to trust the strength of the initiative here. Now it was time to have a long think, as there are many tempting

continuations. In the end, I chose the one I couldn't resist, but there was an intriguing alternative.

**16 e5 h6 (D)**



**17 ♖e3!?**

White chooses to aim for the king. I noticed a more sophisticated idea: 17 ♖b1!? when I could not see a satisfactory continuation for Black. The idea is simple – if the b-pawn goes, the c-pawn(s) will likely follow, when White will have a clear strategic superiority at no cost. That is, White would maintain his advantage in space, and have the bishop pair, while creating strong pressure on what would remain of the black queenside. The tactical justification for this sudden switch of direction is that 17...a6 is met by 18 d6! cxd6 19 ♖e3 when the black queen is snared: 19...c3 20 ♖b3. Play could continue something like: 17...exd5 18 ♖xb5 ♕d7 19 ♖xd5 ♕c6 20 ♖a5 ♖b7 21 ♖a6 ♕b5 22 ♖e3 c3 23 ♖xc3, which was one line I calculated, but this is just a rough sketch. White could insert ♖e3 earlier, and Black could try ...♙b4 on move 20. Finally, I just decided to pursue the path of non-materialism.

**17...♙b4**

I believe 17...♙e7 is better, despite allowing d6, which is far more dangerous than before since the b1-h7 diagonal is open. Sometimes White can unveil an attack on the a8-rook with ♖g5. (Winning the exchange at the cost of the initiative is not to be recommended, however.) When Black's queen is no longer on e7, the battering-ram approach with g4-g5 is much more effective. In this version, Black's c8-bishop has little hope of guarding the h3-square. I can understand why Agdestein did not want to allow all this.

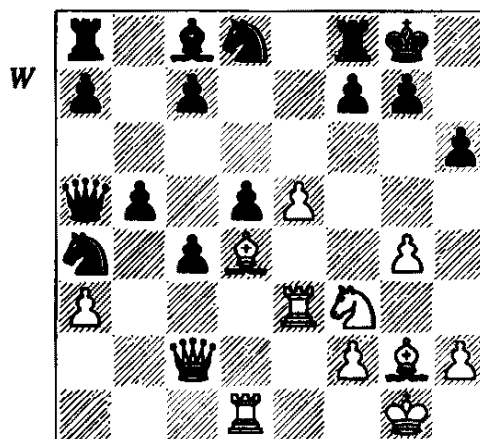
**18 a3 ♙a5**

18...♙e7 was still to be preferred.

**19 g4!**

White tosses pawn number three overboard. Part of the irresistibility of this move lies in its camouflaged nature. It appears to be designed to batter open the black kingside by advancing g4-g5. In fact, the idea is to open the h-file.

**19...exd5 (D)**



This must be correct? Not only does it capture more material, it frees

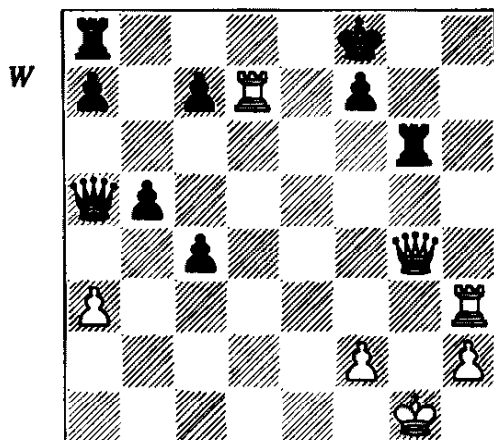
two minor pieces for action and eyes the h3-square.

20 ♖g5!! g6??

An incredible lapse from a player of Agdestein's constitution, which only goes to show the psychological force of a sacrifice or tactical blow. White's idea came as such a shock that Black sees no way to put up resistance. My opponent was so surprised by the sacrifice that he assumed it was not one.

But it is a sacrifice, and it must be accepted: 20...hxc5 21 ♖h3 ♖e8 (for some reason, my opponent thought this move was impossible; alternatives are no good: 21...g6 22 e6 and 21...f5 22 exf6 both lead to total destruction of the black position) 22 ♖h7+ ♔f8 23 ♖xd5! and here two moves demand detailed examination:

a) 23...♖xc4 24 e6 ♖xe6 25 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 26 ♖xc7+ ♔e7 27 ♖c5+!? ♖xc5 28 ♖xc5+ ♖f6 29 ♖xc5+ ♖d6 30 ♖g5+ ♖f6 31 ♖xc4! ♖g6 32 ♖d7+ ♔f8 (32...♔f6 33 ♖f3+ ♔e5 34 ♖f5+) with this position (D):



33 ♖xc6! was the variation I had calculated and which convinced me

the sacrifice had to be played. I made a conscious decision not to work out the other lines in detail.

Since 23 ♖xd5 makes it extremely unlikely that Black's king can cross the d-file safely, g7 and g5 are often terribly weak, and there are numerous sacrificial lines to activate White's bishop pair, I had faith in the attack.

Another ingredient in weighing up the abstract factors that make up compensation, is that Black's strongest pieces are very far from the critical sector – one reason for inserting the move a3 before embarking on the sacrifice. Since White's investment is so large, and he must, in most cases, put the initiative above regaining material, Black's defensive chances cannot be underestimated, and for this reason I decided to preserve as much time on the clock for any difficult problems to come. The variations here give a broad, though far from complete, sketch of White's attacking chances:

b) 23...♖e6 24 ♖c6!! ♔e7 (or 24...♖d8 25 ♖c5+ ♖axc5 26 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 27 ♖h8+ ♔e7 28 ♖e8#) 25 ♖e3! (25 ♖xe8? ♖b7! 26 ♖d7 ♖d8!) and then:

b1) 25...♖c3 26 ♖c5+! ♖xc5 27 ♖xc7 ♖3e4 (27...♖5e4 28 ♖f3 ♖f8 29 ♖d8!!) 28 ♖xe8 ♖e6 29 ♖h8.

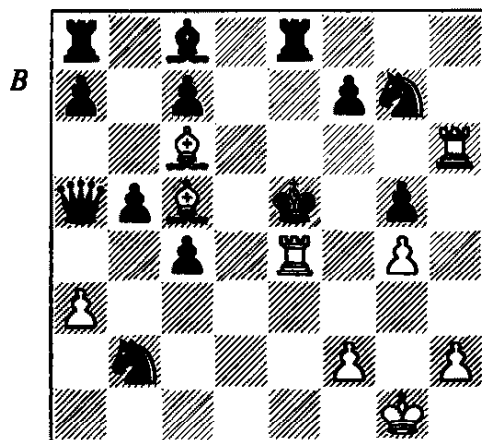
b2) 25...♖b2 26 ♖xc7!! (26 ♖f5!) 26...♖xc7 27 ♖c5+ ♔e6 28 ♖h6+ ♔e5 29 ♖d5+ ♔e4 30 ♖d4+ ♔e5 31 ♖e4# (D).

21 ♖xd5

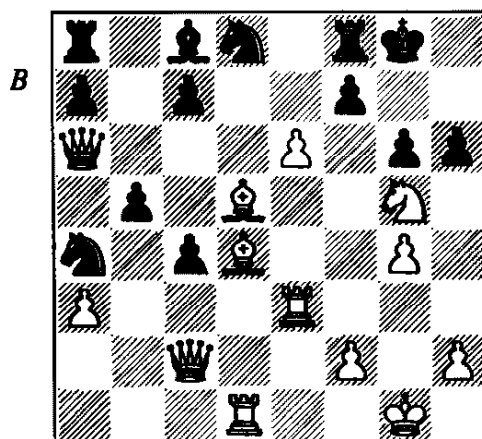
The a8-rook is not important, but the attack on g6 is.

21...♖a6





22 e6 (D)

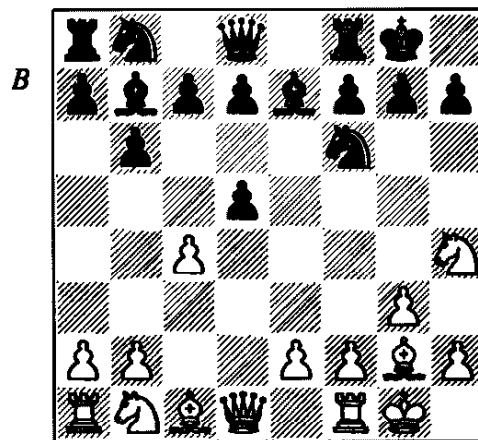


I seem to remember a comment from a David Bronstein game, where a move was described as shattering all the doors and windows of a position. This splinters the furniture as well. In view of the continuation 22...♖xe6 23 ♔xe6! ♔xe6 24 ♔xe6, Black resigned (1-0).

### Something borrowed

J. Tisdall – E. Berg  
Hallsberg 1995/6

1 d4 e6 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 g3 b6 4 ♔g2  
♔b7 5 0-0 ♔e7 6 c4 0-0 7 d5 exd5 8  
♖h4 (D)



An occasionally fashionable pawn sacrifice first played, I believe, by Polugaevsky, and popularized by some sparkling efforts by Kasparov. In recent years it has faded from white repertoires, largely because of defensive ideas unearthed by Karpov and used against Kasparov in their epic match in 1984/5.

The opening illustrates both the dangerous threats a gambiteer can generate, as well as the defensive resources afforded a player with an extra centre pawn (or two).

8...c6 9 cxd5 ♖xd5 10 ♖f5 ♖c7

10...♔c5 11 e4 ♖e7 12 ♖xg7! ♔xg7  
13 b4! with a big white plus is one nuance, seen in Polugaevsky-Korchnoi, Buenos Aires Ct (12) 1980.

11 e4 d5 12 ♔e1

A recent finesse, which hopes to induce Black to open the game while White holds a big lead in development.

12...dxe4?!

After this, White's compensation really is frightening. White will be the first to use the central files, and can also use the e4-square to transfer the relevant piece into the kingside attack.

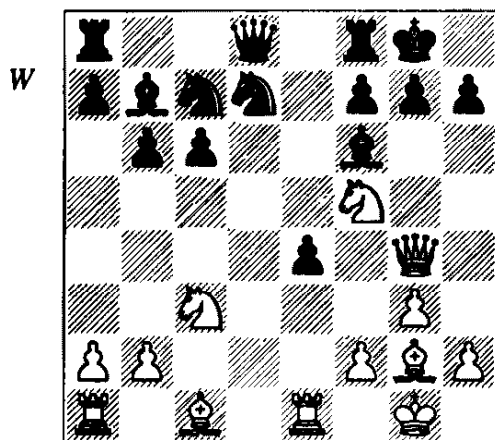
Another consideration is that the c6-pawn will come under pressure, and will often be pinned due to the strong bishop on g2. This reduces the value of Black's extra material. 12...♙f6 is better, keeping the position as closed as possible. I have less faith that White can prove full compensation if he storms forward with 13 e5 but that is a topic for opening articles.

13 ♖g4 ♙f6 14 ♘c3

14 ♙h6!? is an interesting idea, to take some of the punch out of Black's patented defensive manoeuvre ...♙c8, planning something like 14...♘e6 15 ♘c3 ♙h8 16 ♖ad1 ♗c7 17 ♘xe4 ♙xb2 18 ♖d2 with good attacking chances. However, the game continuation has also done well for White.

14...♘d7?! (D)

A natural but dubious novelty, which White fails to cope with in a sensible manner. 14...♙c8 has been played, though White has excellent compensation, as he usually gets the bishop pair to add to his assets.



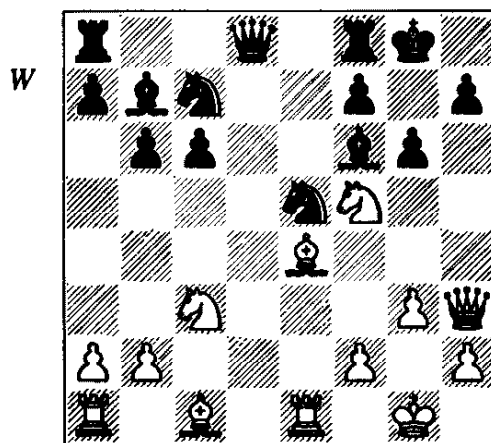
15 ♙xe4?

White proceeds with the attacking ideas employed against ...♙c8, which,

not surprisingly, are not entirely appropriate here. The simple 15 ♘xe4, intending to meet 15...♘e5?! with 16 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 17 ♗xg7+! ♗xg7 18 ♘xg7 ♘d3 19 ♖e7, would have secured him the advantage. Instead, White embarks on a romantic adventure, which at least results in some entertainment.

A more critical soul would reprimand White severely for the lack of flexibility. Applying borrowed ideas out of context is a cardinal sin, and the calculation necessary to see that natural moves were stronger was not difficult. This is a good example of prior information being misleading. It did help to dream up an interesting attack, but stronger moves should take preference!

15...♘e5 16 ♗h3 g6 (D)



Now ...♙c8 looms and the white queen looks a bit silly. White must capitalize on his assets: speed and the as yet insecure position of the black king.

17 ♙h6! ♖e8

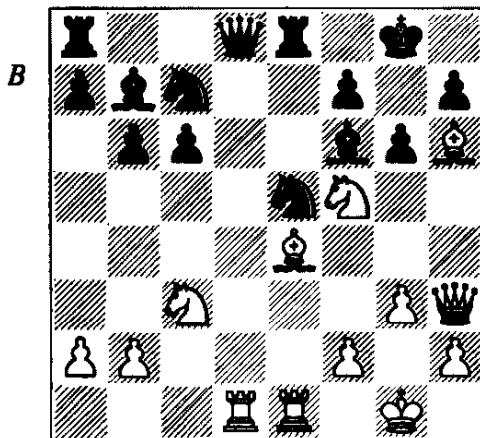
17...gxf5 18 ♗xf5 ♘g6 19 ♖ad1 ♘d5 leads to a situation where White

must find the most accurate way to exploit his advantage in piece activity:

a) 20  $\text{Qxd5! cxd5}$  21  $\text{Qxd5!}$  (21  $\text{Qxf8 Wxf8}$  22  $\text{Wxf6 dxe4}$  23  $\text{Rd7 Rb8}$  is not convincing for White) 21...  $\text{Qc8}$  22  $\text{Wf3}$  and Black faces material losses.

b) 20  $\text{Qxf8?}$  is tempting but the *zwischenzug* 20...  $\text{Qxc3!}$  (20...  $\text{Qxf8?}$  21  $\text{Qxd5 cxd5}$  22  $\text{Qxd5 Qc8}$  23  $\text{Qxf7+ Qxf7}$  24  $\text{Wh5+ Qg7}$  25  $\text{Rxd8 Qxd8}$  26  $\text{Wd5}$  and White wins) prevents White from achieving the desired breakthrough on d5.

18  $\text{Rad1 (D)}$



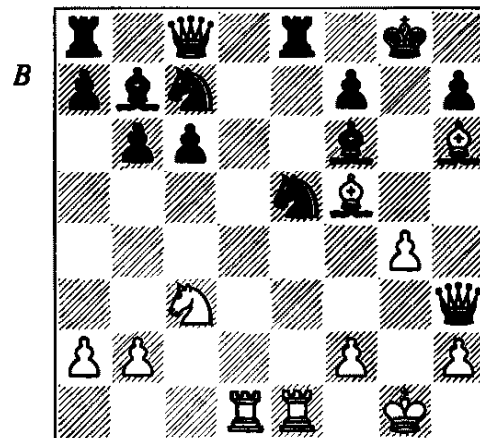
18...  $\text{Wc8?}$

This is a very optimistic move. Now White only needs to find a way to threaten  $\text{Qd6}$  to cause Black a great deal of discomfort. 18...  $\text{Qd5}$  was correct, offering to return the pawn if White plays  $\text{Qe3}$ . This may have been unappealing, but White has no advantage after the exchanges necessary to regain the sacrificed material. A good example of selling back the extra bit of central influence to achieve a satisfactory game.

19  $\text{g4!}$

This solves all of White's problems, at the cost of a piece. For the investment White's queen comes to life, and Black must either allow  $\text{Qd6}$  or expose his king. This game was played just after my game with Agdestein, so the idea of line-opening in this fashion did not even have to be dredged up from the subconscious. Here we see a more fortuitous use of acquired knowledge. It is no coincidence that one has a better chance of using one's own concoctions properly than those we borrow and only half digest.

19...  $\text{gxf5}$  20  $\text{Qxf5 (D)}$



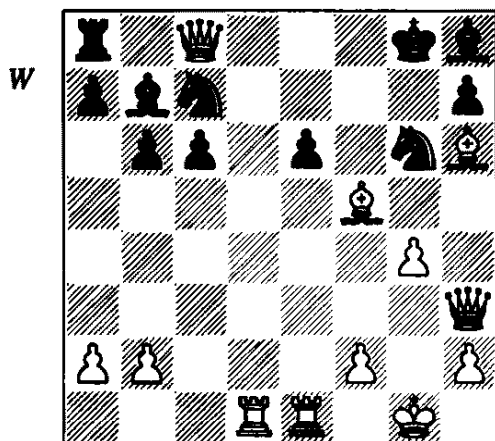
20...  $\text{Re6}$

Black must protect the f6-bishop: 20...  $\text{Qe6}$  21  $\text{Qxh7+ Qxh7}$  22  $\text{Qg5+ Qg8}$  23  $\text{Qxf6 Qg6}$  24  $\text{Wh6 Wc7}$  25  $\text{Rxe6 fxe6}$  26  $\text{Wxg6+ Qf8}$  27  $\text{Wh6+ Qg8}$  28  $\text{Wh8+ Qf7}$  29  $\text{Wg7#}$ .

Now Black has many worries. His king is both cramped and exposed, and terrible threats radiate from the diagonals of the bishop on f5. White can now recoup a bit of the sacrifice without slackening the pace of his assault.

21  $\text{Qe4 Qh8}$  22  $\text{Qg5 Qg6}$  23  $\text{Qxe6 fxe6 (D)}$

23...♖xe6 24 ♜xe6 fxe6 25 ♛b3 (25 ♜d8+ also wins, but in this case the flashy way is probably even more efficient) 25...♕f8 (25...♖f7 26 ♜d8! +-) 26 ♜d8! ♛xd8 27 ♛xe6+! ♕xe6 28 ♙xe6#.



24 ♛b3! ♖f7

24...♕e5!? gives Black better prospects to defend if White goes amok, but if he remembers that he has a reasonable material balance and more active forces, he can attack at a more leisurely pace.

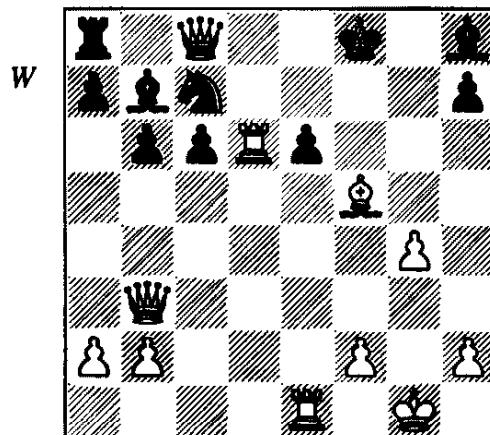
a) Thus the forceful 25 ♜d6? c5 (25...♖f7!?) 26 ♜xe5 ♙xe5 27 ♜xe6 c4! (27...♙d5 28 ♜xe5 and White will emerge with the better game) 28 ♛xc4 (28 ♛e3 ♕xe6 29 ♛xe5 ♖f7) 28...♙d5 ends in Black's favour after precise defence.

b) The simple 25 ♙f4! is the correct way to proceed. After 25...♕f3+ 26 ♛xf3 exf5 27 gxf5 Black's exposed king should not last long against White's fully mobilized onslaught.

25 ♜d6 ♕f8 26 ♙xf8 ♖xf8 (D)

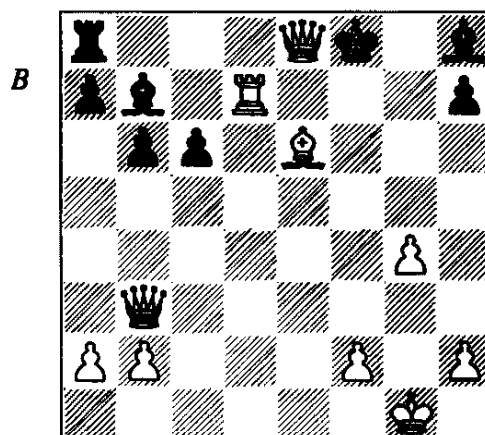
27 ♜exe6!

It is not hard to understand that the material count is irrelevant – Black's



pieces are not participating in the defence and his king is outrageously exposed.

27...♕xe6 28 ♙xe6 ♛e8 29 ♜d7 (D)



Threatening the bishop on b7 and a check on f3. One has only to look at where the black pieces are to understand that their physical presence does not influence the game. One proverbial nugget regarding sacrifices is not to look at what has been removed from the board, but to see what remains. The point being, it is not just what remains, but what those pieces are doing. Taking up space or being removed from the board do not qualify as respectable jobs.

The white queen has exploited its mobility along the third rank in exemplary fashion. The rest is mayhem.

29... ♖g6 30 ♔f5 ♜f6 31 ♔xh7 ♕e8 32 ♜xb7 ♔g7 33 ♜g8+ ♔f8 33... ♜f8 34 ♜e6+.

34 ♔g6+ ♕d8 and Black resigned, belatedly, before White could play 35 ♜f7 (1-0).

### Queen Power

I remember an interesting analysis session I had once with IM Leonid Bass. Leo was taking the side of a badly outnumbered queen, and putting up amazing resistance against both several pieces and multiple analysts. After convincing his adversaries that the position was far less clear than we all had thought, his simple and emphatic explanation was: "The queen is a very strong piece!"

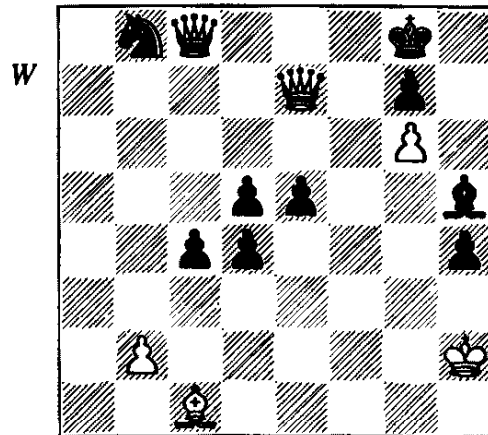
I know that's obvious, but sometimes, it isn't.

How strong is the queen? Have a look at the following position. It should impress and amuse even the jaded. It is practically a one-position course in how to use her majesty. She's a mover.

1 ♜f7+ ♕h8 2 ♔h6! ♜g8 3 ♔xg7+ ♜xg7

Ready, set, go!

4 ♜e8+ ♜g8 5 ♜xe5+ ♜g7 6 ♜xb8+ ♜g8 7 ♜e5+ ♜g7 8 ♜xh5+ ♕g8 9 ♜xd5+ ♕h8



### Vikovich<sup>1</sup>

9... ♕f8 10 ♜d8#.

10 ♜d8+ ♜g8 11 ♜xd4+ ♜g7 12 ♜xh4+ ♕g8 13 ♜xc4+

and now White can simply trade queens and promote the b-pawn.

### Positional sacrifices and 'combinations'

In the Appendix 2, common tactical themes, I mention that there are quieter, strategic versions of those themes more commonly associated with decisive attacks or combinations. The most common of these are pawn sacrifices to rupture the enemy structure, and clearance sacrifices to increase the range of one's pieces.

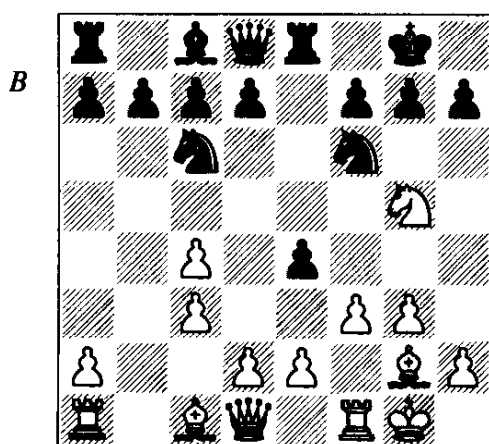
Although pawn sacrifices that expose the opponent's king are well known and dramatic, the subtler version designed to inflict lasting strategic problems can be just as deadly. Have a look at an extremely sophisticated version:

1 I found this amusing example in Gelfer's *Positional Chess Handbook*, but have been unable to find out more about the source of the position.

## Destruction of pawn structure

G. Kasparov – A. Karpov  
*Seville Wch (2) 1987*

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3  
 ♙b4 5 ♙g2 0-0 6 0-0 e4 7 ♘g5 ♙xc3  
 8 bxc3 ♗e8 9 f3 (D)



### 9...e3!?

A bold innovation that set the fourth title match between these players off to a dramatic start.

### 10 d3 (!)

Declining the sacrifice has received the universal stamp of approval. This is perhaps a bit surprising, as accepting it also leads to very obscure play. The greatest drawback to accepting the sacrifice is that White's c-pawns, and so his entire queenside, become incurably weak. As long as Black takes care not to let White use his kingside pawn-mass aggressively, he has a very solid position and can look forward to counterplay on the other flank.

Some of the analysis circulating at the time of the match gives a rough idea of how these positional considerations translate into variations after 10 dxe3:

a) The simple and solid 10...d6!? should give Black good play. As long as Black keeps the white c4-pawn fixed as a long-range target he will have plenty to do, and nearly all of his pieces are potential attackers on the queenside. White may try to jettison this pawn with c5!? at some point, to create a completely unbalanced pawn structure, though even this will not cure the problem of weakened squares on the queenside. By playing ...b6, Black avoids even this possibility...

b) 10...b6!? 11 e4 and then:

b1) 11...♙a6?! 12 f4 h6 13 ♘xf7 ♙xf7 14 e5 ♙xc4 (14...♘g8? 15 ♙d5+ ♙f8 16 ♙a3+ ♘ge7 17 ♗d3 d6 18 ♗h7 and the advance of the f-pawn will blow Black's king sky high) 15 exf6 and White's attacking chances should be the most pertinent factor in the position.

b2) After the insertion of 11...h6 12 ♘h3 ♙a6 Black can pursue his hobby of harassing the white weaknesses in relative peace, and has ample compensation for the pawn.

### 10...d5

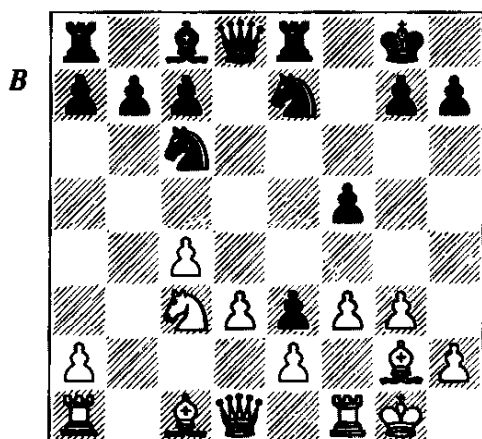
Black wishes to open the position. To some, this might seem strange, since White has the proverbially fearsome bishop pair, and doubled c-pawns. Several factors change the assessment of the position. The advanced e-pawn cramps White in many ways. Although White can get his bishops working on the long diagonals, the centre itself falls under black piece control later, especially the d4-square. This can be deduced from the necessary white freeing moves c4 and

f4, which will weaken d4 and g4, both potentially useful attacking squares for Black. The e3-pawn is an attacking asset (a pawn near the king – see Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice), and prevents the free flow of pieces to the white kingside.

11 ♖b3

11 cxd5 ♘xd5 and now:

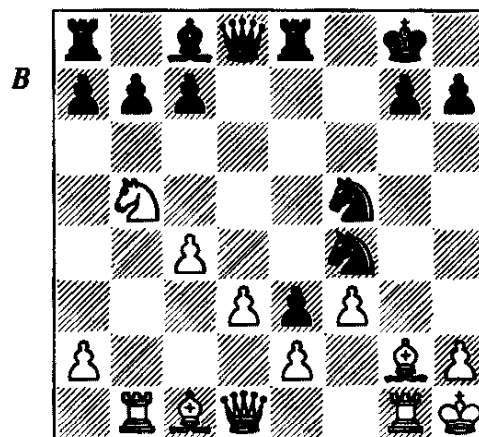
a) 12 ♘e4?! is a related game that fits in very well with the topic of discussion (pawn sacrifices to disrupt the enemy structure). It seems this theme thrives in this variation: 12...f5 13 c4 ♘de7 14 ♘c3 (D).



14...f4! (preserving the gem on e3 and freeing Black's minor pieces) 15 gxf4? ♘f5 16 ♖b1 ♘cd4 17 ♘b5 ♘e6 18 ♔h1 ♘xf4 19 ♖g1 (D).

19...♘g3+! 20 hxg3 ♖g5 0-1 (White is faced with inevitable execution on the h-file) C.Holland-Plaskett, Hastings Open 1994/5.

b) 12 ♖b3!? ♘a5 (12...♖xg5 13 f4 ♘xf4 14 ♖xf4 gives White a strong initiative for the pawn) 13 ♖a3 ♖xg5 14 ♖xa5 ♖e5 (14...b6 15 f4 is again to be avoided for Black) 15 d4 (not 15 f4? ♘xf4! 16 ♖xe5 ♘xe2+ 17 ♔h1 ♖xe5



18 ♖b2 ♖b5 and Black is clearly better) 15...♖d6 with a complex game, and planning to answer 16 ♖a3 by 16...♖c6 17 f4 ♖xc3 18 ♖a4 ♖e6! 19 f5? ♘b6.

11...♘a5 12 ♖a3 c6 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 f4 ♘c6

This complicated position is still being debated in top-level circles. In the inaugural game, Black eventually won after a tremendous and confusing struggle.

### The positional clearance sacrifice

Now we have seen that a sacrifice to disrupt pawn structure can have nearly as profound an influence on the course of a game as the more brutal tactical version used to damage a king shelter.

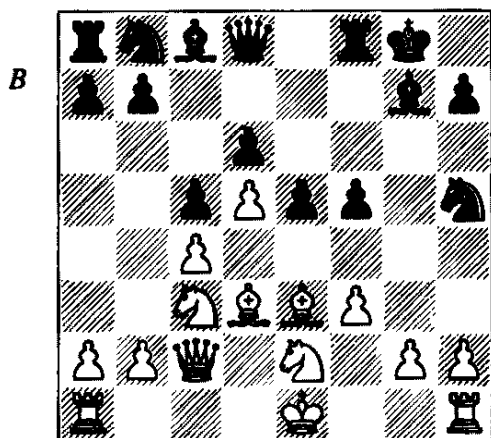
The tactical theme of clearance can take place at any stage of the game, and can be just as useful in an ending as when launching an attack. Here are some sedate, strategic examples of the clearance sacrifice. You will encounter these themes in practice as often as their flashier attacking counterparts. The examples given here are part of a basic repertoire of pawn combat.

## Shaving on Kotov's face

Kotov gives a fragment of this game in his book *Think Like a Grandmaster*. It is about as clear an example as one could wish, and has now entered the chess armoury as a completely normal method of handling such positions for Black.

**A. Kotov – S. Gligorić**  
Zurich Ct 1953

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6  
5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5 7 d5 c5 8 ♗d3 ♘h5  
9 ♘ge2 f5 10 exf5 gxf5 11 ♖c2 (D)



**11...e4! 12 fxe4 f4!**

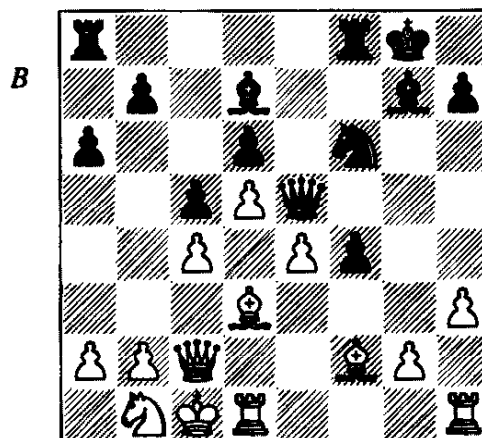
This dual-action mechanism has been dubbed the 'sealer-sweeper'. The first move sacrifices a pawn to jam the action of several enemy pieces, the second pawn forges past into aggressive position. The offer also extends the range of the g7-bishop and creates a strong point on e5.

13 ♗f2 ♘d7 14 ♘g1 ♖g5 15 ♗f1  
♘e5 16 ♘f3 ♖e7 17 ♘xe5 ♖xe5

Gligorić makes good use of the e5-square, and envisages opening the

b-file to mount pressure against the b2-pawn.

18 0-0-0 ♘f6 19 h3 ♗d7 20 ♗d3  
a6 21 ♘b1 (D)



The knight is eyeing the f3-square. If the steed reaches that post, White will regain influence of the key d4- and e5-squares...

**21...f3!**

The enemy's vital point is your own.

**22 gxf3 ♘h5**

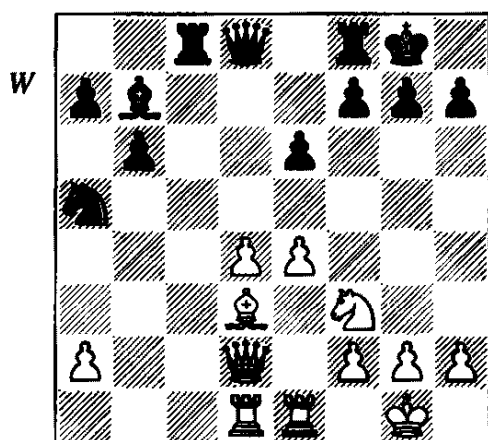
Opens the long diagonal, the f-file, and prepares to occupy the f4-square. White's extra material only hinders the action of his own forces, which are helpless to do anything but watch as Black occupies the key points cleared by the sacrifices. Now White faces a grim defensive task. A combination of careful defence and material superiority just allows him to hold the balance.

23 ♘d2 ♘f4 24 ♗f1 b5 25 h4 ♖h8  
26 ♖g1 ♗f6 27 ♘b3 ♖ab8 28 ♗e1 b4  
29 ♖b1 ♖a8 30 ♗g3 ♖g8 31 ♖h2  
♖xg3 32 ♖xg3 ♘e2 33 ♖xe2 ♖xg3  
34 ♘c1 a5 35 ♘d3 ♗d4 36 h5 ♖h4  
37 ♗g2 ♖g8 38 ♖h1 ♖g3 39 ♗f1 a4  
40 ♖c2 a3 41 b3 ½-½



One explanation for the peaceful result is the variation 41...♖f8 42 ♔g2 (42 f4 ♖xf4 43 ♜xf4 ♜c3+ 44 ♔d1 ♜a1+ 45 ♔d2 ♜xa2+ and Black's queenside pawn(s) will decide the game) 42...♖g8 43 ♔f1 and Black still has to prove he has more than his money's worth for the sacrifice. White certainly had no joy from his extra material in this game.

### More pawn-related violence



**L. Polugaevsky – M. Tal**  
*USSR Ch (Moscow) 1969*

**16 d5!**

Another typical pawn sacrifice with the motive of sealing and sweeping. Accepting the offer on d5 leads to temporary blockage of Black's queen and bishop, and White uses the time gained to launch an attack.

**16...exd5**

16...♜d6!? was better.

**17 e5!**

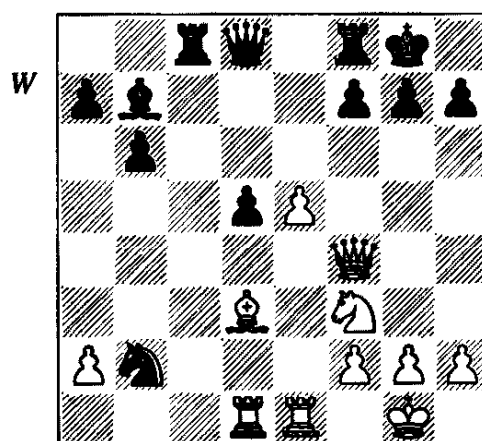
The e-pawn moves into attacking position and unveils the gaze of the white bishop.

**17...♜c4**

If 17...♜e7, then 18 ♜d4 gives White attacking chances and fine positional compensation. 17...h6 18 ♜f4 ♜c6 19 ♜f5 g6 20 ♜g4 gave White a punishing attack in N.Popov-Rumiantsev, USSR 1978.

**18 ♜f4 ♜b2 (D)**

If 18...h6, then 19 ♜f5 g6 20 ♜h3 ♜g7 21 e6 shatters the black kingside.



Now the stage is set for the best-known of chess sacrifices. Of course Tal of all people must have taken it into serious consideration, but presumably missed White's 21st move.

**19 ♔xh7+! ♜xh7 20 ♜g5+ ♔g6 21 h4!!**

This elegant move is the point behind the sophisticated version of this old classic. The threat is 22 h5+ ♜xh5 23 g4+ ♜g6 24 ♜f5+ ♜h6 25 ♜h7+ ♜g5 26 ♜h5+ ♜f4 27 ♜f5#. Tal finds nothing better than to prolong resistance in a lost ending.

**21...♖c4**

21...f5 is met by 22 ♖d4! planning h5, while if 21...♜d7, 22 e6 fxe6 23 ♜g4 ♖f6 24 ♜xe6+ ♜h6 25 ♖e5 g6 26 ♜g5+ wins.

22 h5+ ♔h6 23 ♖xf7+ ♔h7 24 ♜f5+ ♔g8 25 e6! ♜f6

If 25...♜e7 White strips open the kingside with 26 h6!. White realized his advantage like this:

26 ♜xf6 gxf6 27 ♜d2

27 ♖d6!.

27...♜c6! 28 ♜xb2 ♜e8

28...♜c8, although still bad for Black, was better.

29 ♖h6+ ♔h7 30 ♖f5 ♜exe6 31 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 32 ♜c2 ♜c6 33 ♜e2 ♜c8 34 ♜e7+ ♔h8 35 ♖h4 f5 36 ♖g6+ ♔g8 37 ♜xa7 1-0

### Sealing, Sweeping, Breaking, Passing; Pawn dynamics

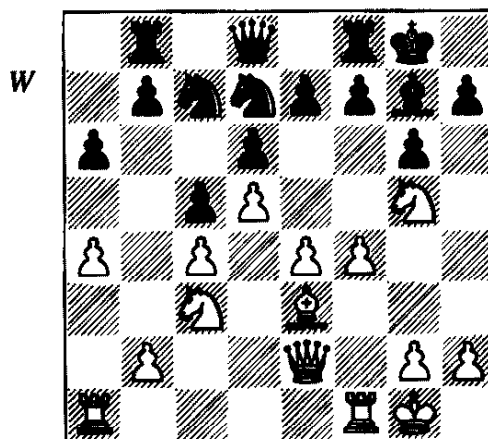
The following game made a big impression on me. I was attending the tournament as a commentator and annotator, and rarely have I seen a game packed with so much educational value.

#### A. Khalifman – B. Larsen

*London, Watson, Farley & Williams  
1991*

1 d4 ♖f6 2 ♖f3 d6 3 c4 ♜g4 4 ♖c3 g6 5 e4 ♜g7 6 ♜e2 ♖fd7 7 ♜e3 c5 8 d5 ♖a6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖g5 ♜xe2 11 ♜xe2 ♖c7 12 a4 a6 13 f4 ♜b8 (D)

Play has reached a Benoni type of pawn formation. White has several thematic plans in such structures. The Modern Benoni formation (with the black pawn on e7 exchanged for the white one on c4, by the sequence ...e7-e6xd5 and c4xd5) is a more common setting for these plans, but they apply



to the structure as a whole. The most popular plan is the development of an attack by the sealing/sweeping sequence e5, answering ...dxe5 with f5. Another option is to use the b-file and create pressure on the queenside pawns by arranging the advance b2-b4. Finally, the creation of a passed d6-pawn to create disarray in the black camp often occurs, particularly in the Modern Benoni, where White has a central pawn preponderance. The remarkable thing about this game is that Khalifman employs all of these devices!

14 e5! dxe5 15 f5

The kingside assault is in motion. The pawn sacrifice clears the e4-square for cavalry manoeuvres, activates the f1-rook and stifles both the g7-bishop and d7-knight – good value for a pawn.

15...b5

Larsen strikes back with one of Black's thematic breaks, and creates the chance to use the b8-rook to defend the kingside.

16 axb5 axb5 17 ♜g4 ♜b6 18 b4!

The unfortunate situation of the b6-rook allows Khalifman to strike out on

the opposite flank as well. The b-pawn manages to join the attack...

18...gxf5 19 ♖xf5 ♜g6 20 bxc5 bxc4 21 d6!

...and manages to play a key role! Khalifman achieves breakthrough number three, an unusual hat-trick.

21...exd6 22 cxd6 ♘e6

The d-pawn is immune from capture as the rook must block ♖xh7#. 22...♘e8 23 ♘xf7 ♘xd6 24 ♖xg6 hxg6 25 ♘xd8 ♜xd8 26 ♜ad1 should win for White.

For completeness I give the rest of my notes to the game, though we have now covered the relevant material.

23 ♘xf7

23 ♘d5!? may be the most accurate, according to Khalifman. [Editor's note: Then Fritz indicates 23...♜xg5, when 24 ♘e7+ ♖h8 25 ♙xg5 ♖b6+ 26 ♖h1 ♖xd6 looks quite OK for Black.]

23...♖f6!

23...♖e8 looks more critical but meets with an elegant refutation. 24 ♘d5! ♜xf7 (24...♖xf7 25 ♘e7+) 25 ♖xf7+! ♖xf7 26 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 (alternatively 26...♖h8 27 ♜xf7 or 26...♖f8 27 ♜a8+) 27 dxe7 ♘c7 28 ♜a8+ and the pawn (which began life on b2!) promotes.

24 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 25 ♜xf6 ♙xf6?

After 25...♘xf6! it is not clear how large White's advantage is – Khalifman. [Editor's note: for example 26 ♘h6+ ♙xh6 27 ♙xh6 ♜d8.]

26 ♘h6+ ♖g7 27 ♜a7

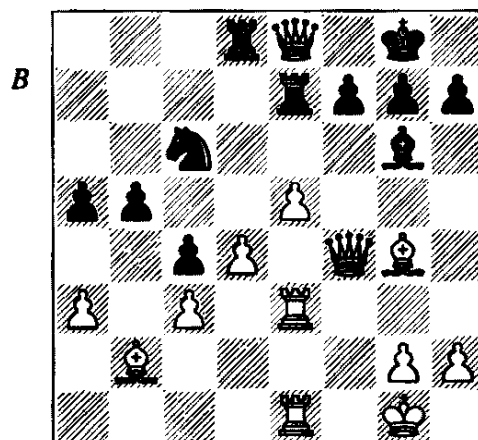
White's attack, aided by the powerful passed d-pawn, continues into the ending.

27...♜d8 28 ♘f5+! ♖g6 29 ♘e7+ ♖f7 30 ♘c6 ♜c8 31 ♜xd7+ ♖e8 32 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 33 ♜e7+ ♖d8

33...♖f8 34 ♙h6+ ♖g8 35 ♜xe6 ♙xc3 36 d7.

34 ♙b6+ 1-0

### The positional exchange sacrifice



S. Reshevsky – T. Petrosian  
Zurich Ct 1953

Black's position is rather grim. White has mobilized an impressive centre, and can cause further discomfort by setting the d-pawn in motion, or putting a rook on the g-file and shoving his h-pawn. Black must also beware of the e-pawn crashing through to e6 at an inopportune moment. Petrosian solves these problems in patented style.

25...♜e6! 26 a4

26 h4!? was an alternative, planning to press on with h4-h5 and ♜g3, but Black's last move has greatly increased the co-ordination of his pieces.

26...♘e7!

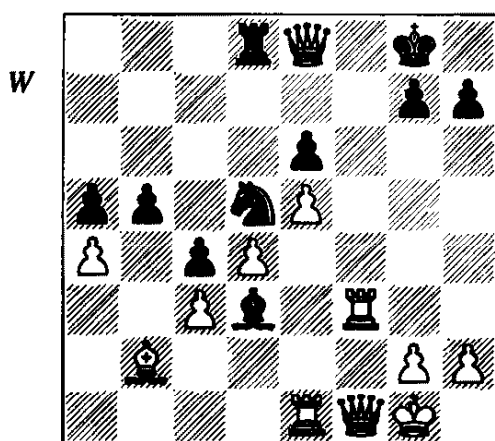
Petrosian does not allow himself to be distracted from shoring up the

protection of the relevant squares. 26...b4? 27 d5! ♖xd5 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 29 ♖xc4 would allow White to take the material in a much improved version, with the position much more open and conducive to rooks.

27 ♗xe6 fxe6 28 ♖f1

28 ♖f2 ♘d5 29 ♖f3 b4 sets the queenside pawns in motion.

28...♘d5 29 ♖f3 ♗d3 (D)



30 ♖xd3!

White sensibly returns most of his material advantage. Or else Black's magnificent minor pieces, domination of the light squares, and queenside pawn majority would quickly become too dangerous. This move is also consistent with White's 26th move, which aimed to disrupt Black's blockade on the light squares.

30...cxd3 31 ♖xd3

Now it seems that White will be able to regain the initiative and liberate his bishop and central pawns...

31...b4! 32 cxb4

Unfortunately, the thematic move 32 c4 does not clearly improve the white position: 32...♘b6 33 ♖c1 ♘xa4 34 ♗a1 ♖c6 with complicated play.

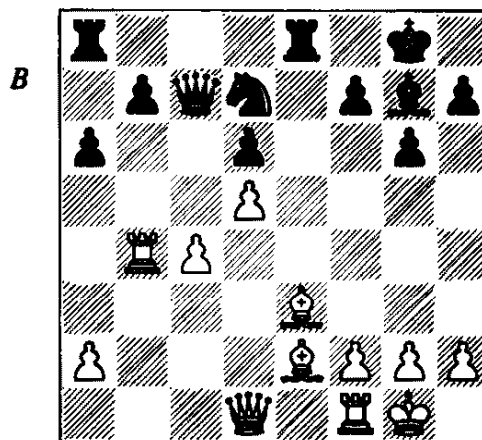
However, after capturing on b4, the beautiful, unassailable knight on d5 frees Black from worries.

32...axb4

32...♘xb4!? was also possible. Bronstein gave the variations 33 ♖b3 ♘d5 and 33 ♖b5 ♖xb5 34 axb5 ♘d3 35 ♖e2 ♖b8 36 ♖d2 ♖xb5 37 ♖xd3 ♖xb2 38 d5 as leading to equality. The game concluded:

33 a5 ♖a8 34 ♖a1 ♖c6 35 ♗c1 ♖c7 36 a6 ♖b6 37 ♗d2 b3 38 ♖c4 h6 39 h3 b2 40 ♖b1 ♗h8 41 ♗e1 1/2-1/2

White has no hope of an advantage, and so the game was agreed drawn here. The superior minor piece is worth at least a pawn. This is one of the best known positional exchange sacrifices.



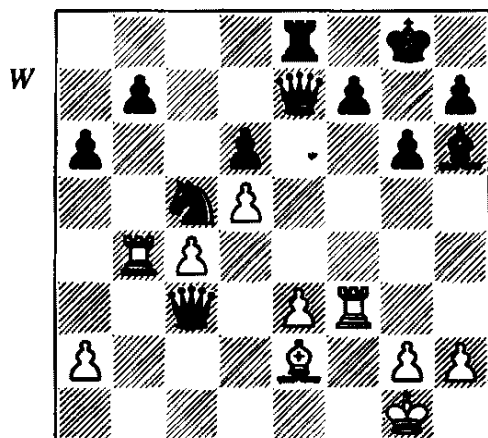
**L. Polugaevsky – T. Petrosian**  
*USSR Ch (Moscow) 1983*

19...♖xe3! 20 fxe3 ♘c5

What has Black gained for his offer? The knight at c5 is inviolate, which means that his queenside is secure. It also means that White's bishop is unlikely to become active since the pawns from a- to d-files are now rigid.

He has a weakness on e3 to hit, and another eternal outpost on e5, thanks to the transformation of White's f-pawn to an e-pawn. He dominates the dark squares, and has a position that is virtually free of targets. All of this gives him an objectively good position, and robs White's position of almost all of its potential. Subjectively, White's position is very difficult to play, since he is both 'ahead' in a strictly material sense, but 'behind' in terms of being able to undertake anything. These factors lead to, and explain, White's remarkable collapse.

21 ♖c2 ♜e8 22 ♜f3 ♙h6 23 ♖c3 ♚e7 (D)



None of these moves are very difficult. White will not even have the comfort of being able to exploit the more open position type if his e-pawn falls since Black so strongly dominates this most useful file.

24 ♜b6??

White hopes to return the exchange on e3, when the black d-pawn falls. How depressing White's position was,

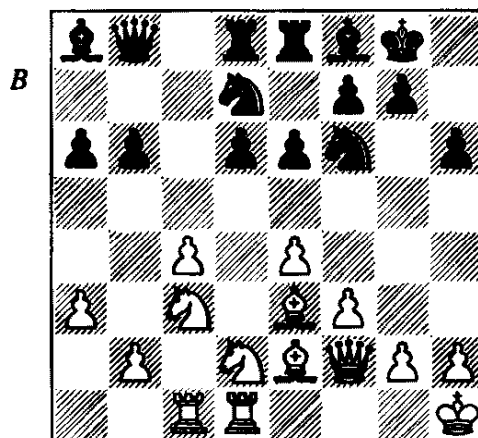
can be gauged by the magnitude of his blunder.

24...♙a4 0-1

White loses everything.

### Spiritual successor

Swedish super-GM Ulf Andersson carried the development of the positional sacrifice forward. Here are two famous examples against noteworthy opposition. Neither of the offers achieves clear results, and one could argue that neither of them was necessary. They do create a fascinating dynamic (im)balance, and succeeded at the very highest level.



A. Karpov – U. Andersson  
Milan 1975

24...d5!?

A thematic pawn sacrifice, and a very common weapon in this particular, 'hedgehog'<sup>1</sup> type of position.

25 cxd5 exd5 26 exd5 ♙d6

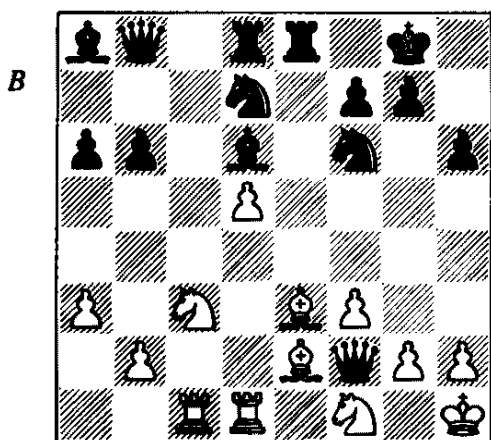
So far, a documented type of pawn sacrifice. Black has a nice blockade,

1 So-called because Black is rolled up in a bristly, and surprisingly sharp, ball.

an active bishop on d6, and chances to round up the pawn with ...b5 and ...b6. Andersson is planning an ambitious twist on this positional idea.

27 d1 (D)

27 d4?! dxe4 28 dxe4 exh2 29 g3? exf4! 30 fxe4 exg3 is clearly not advisable for White.



27...exf4?

The pedestrian 27...b5 28 a7! b7 29 d4 is better for White, since Black's pieces have lost their co-ordination.

28 dxe3!

28 exf4 exf4 29 d4 exf4 30 exf4 b5! 31 d1 b6 and Andersson rounds up the pawn: 32 d3 (32 d6 dxe8) 32...bxd5 33 cxd5 exd5 34 f5 e8 and the little combination 35 dxe6+? gxe6 36 fxe6 fails to 36...exf4 37 fxd5?? e1#.

28...exh2 29 d1

29 d5!? exf4 30 d7+ (30 c2 e5! is frightening for White, who lacks kingside defenders) 30...f8 31 c6 exf4 32 dxc6 e5!?, planning ...g3 with a winning attack (the immediate 32...exf4 33 fxf4 d5 34 b4 d6 35 axa6 favours White),

leads to a messy position with mutual chances.

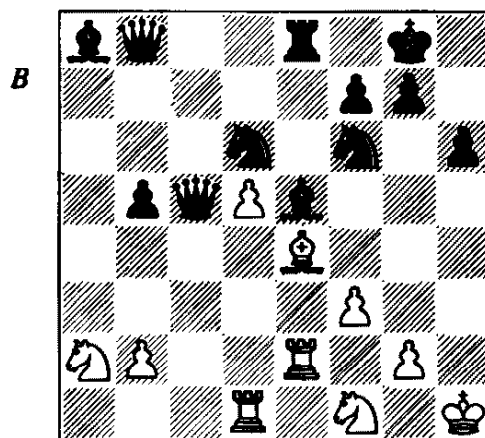
29...exf4 30 c2 b5! 31 d3 b6 32 e4?! d4 33 a4?! e8 34 axb5 axb5 35 e2 e5

Creating the annoying threat of ...dxb2.

36 c5 d6

Here a short check-list can reassure us that Black has all the ingredients necessary for full compensation: dark-square domination, a strong blockading knight, and a much safer king.

37 a2?! (D)



The knight is not completely secure on c3, with ideas like ...c8 and the return of ...d4, but heading for b4 and c6 is not the solution. The knight never gets to complete the circuit.

37...dxe4!

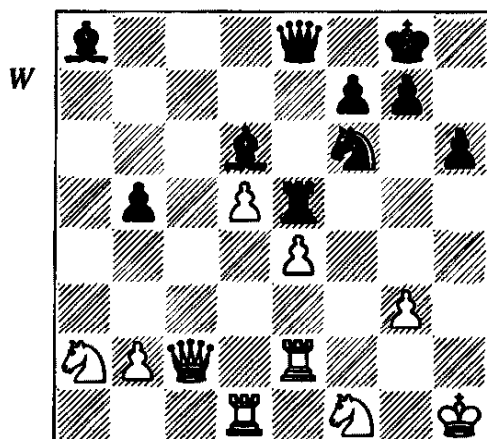
Not an obvious move if one is guided by superficial principles. The blockading knight looked stronger than White's bishop. More relevant is that Black's control of the dark squares allows him to monitor the white centre pawns, and the pawn on e4 now becomes a target. And if the e-pawn falters, the d-pawn becomes

vulnerable again. The exchange also slightly increases the amount of exposure around the white king. I am sure that Andersson's profound strategic feeling convinced him that such gains could be made when making the original sacrifice. Karpov clearly understood the risks but trusted in the combination of the material and his technique.

38 fxe4 ♖d6 39 ♛c2 ♜e5!

Watch now as Andersson methodically mounts magnificent pressure on e4.

40 g3 ♛e8! (D)



41 ♜de1 ♖b7

Inching back into play.

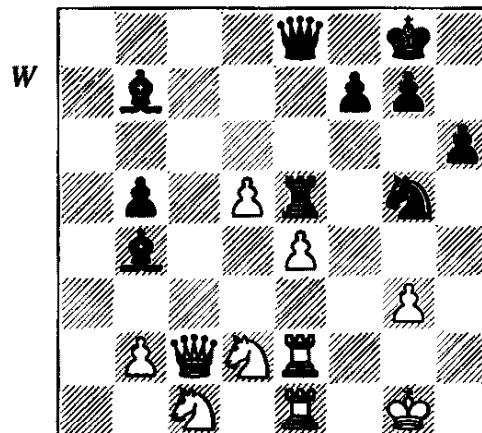
42 ♔g1 ♕h7!

Tremendous composure from the Swede, who calmly continues to improve his position by taking up an even better vantage point from which to assail e4.

43 ♕c1 ♕g5 44 ♕d2 ♖b4! (D)

45 ♔f2

White can no longer retain his booty: 45 ♛d3 ♖xd2 46 ♜xd2 ♖xd5 and White's kingside vaporizes. After 45 ♔g2 ♛d7! Black switches to direct



attack: 46 ♕d3 ♛h3+ 47 ♔f2 ♖xd2 48 ♛xd2 (48 ♕xe5 ♛h2+ 49 ♔f1 ♛h1+ 50 ♔f2 ♕h3#) 48... ♛h2+ 49 ♔f1 ♛h1+ 50 ♔f2 ♕h3+ 51 ♔e3 ♜xe4#.

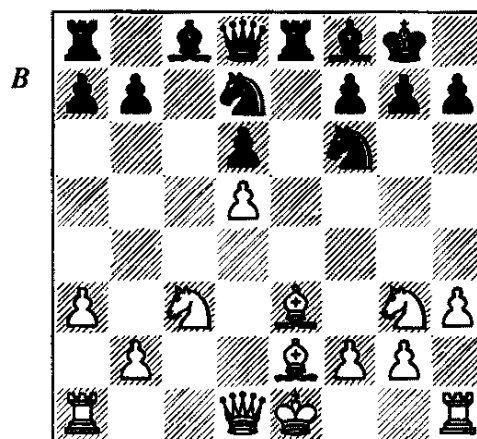
45... ♖xd2

Better than 45... ♛e7 46 ♕cb3! and White maintains control over f3.

46 ♜xd2 ♕xe4+

and Black's extra pawn and enduring attack gave him a winning advantage.

Give me your best shot



G. Kasparov – U. Andersson  
Moscow 1981

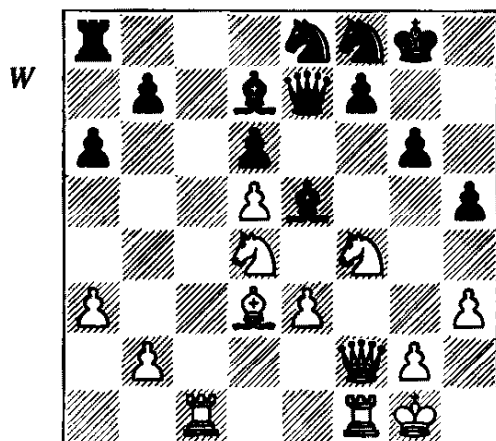
13... ♜xe3?!

This is a much more extravagant sacrifice than the one seen in the game Polugaevsky-Petrosian. The position here is much less simplified. The presence of white knights means that no squares are completely unassailable by White. Nevertheless, the domination of the dark squares and the loss of flexibility in the white pawn structure gives White enormous technical difficulties, and even though Black was always struggling, Kasparov could not manage to break down the Swede's defences.

14 fxe3 g6 15 0-0 ♖e7 16 ♗d4 ♙g7 17 ♗f4 ♘e8!?

Black intends to put the bishop on e5.

18 ♖ac1 ♙e5 19 ♗f2 ♘df6 20 ♙d3 h5 21 ♘ge2! ♘h7 22 ♘f4 ♘f8 23 ♘b5 a6 24 ♘d4 ♙d7 (D)



Black has a passive but solid position. After 83 moves, the game was drawn.

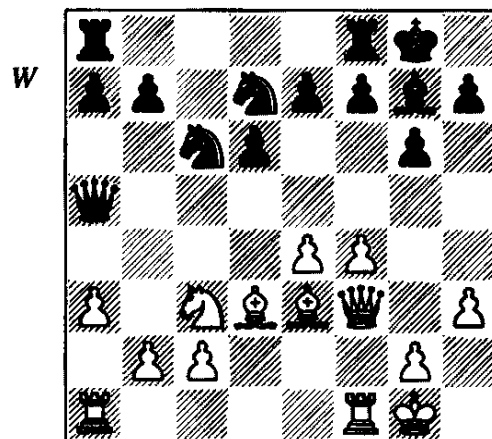
### The mysterious exchange sacrifice

The next game is included for further study. It made a great impression on

me at the time it was played, and to be honest, it still does, and it still baffles me. Ljubojević seems to declare that the pieces simply are not worth what we are taught they are. I cannot explain this paradox, but examining it will at least give the reader an idea of what is possible, at least in practical play.

L. Ljubojević – E. Torre  
Manila 1975

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f4 ♙g7 5 ♘f3 c5 6 dxc5 ♗a5 7 ♙d3 ♗xc5 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 ♙e3 ♗a5 10 0-0 ♙g4 11 h3 ♙xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘c6 13 a3 ♘d7 (D)



14 b4!? ♗d8 15 ♘e2 ♙xa1 16 ♖xa1 e6 17 ♖d1 a6 18 c3 ♗e7 19 ♙c2 ♖fe8 20 ♙f2 d5 21 ♘g3 ♖ad8 22 a4 d4 23 b5 axb5 24 axb5 ♘a7 25 cxd4 ♘xb5 26 ♗d3 ♘c7 27 f5 b5 28 fxe6 ♗xe6 29 ♗f3 ♗f6 30 ♗g4 ♗c6 31 ♙b3 ♗c3 32 ♗f3 ♗xf3 33 gxf3 ♘e6 34 e5 ♘g5 35 ♙g2 ♖c8 36 ♙e1 ♖a8 37 ♙b4 ♘b6 38 f4 ♘e6 39 ♙f3 ♘c7 40 d5 ♘a6 41 ♙d6 ♘c8 42 ♘e4 ♘xd6 43 ♘xd6 ♖eb8 44 ♘e4 ♘b4 45 d6 ♖a3 46 ♘c5 ♘a6 47 ♘xa6 ♖xa6 48



f5 ♖a3 49 ♜d3 gxf5 50 ♔f4 ♔f8 51 ♔xf5 ♖a1 52 ♜f3 ♜e1 53 ♔g4 ♜e4+ 54 ♔g3 ♜xe5 55 ♜xf7+ ♔e8 56 ♔f4 ♜c5 57 ♙e6 ♜d8 58 d7+ ♜xd7 59 ♜xd7 h6 60 ♜h7 ♔f8 61 ♙f5 b4 62 ♜xh6 ♜b5 63 ♔g5 ♔g7 64 ♜h7+ ♔g8 65 ♜c7 ♜b6 66 ♙g6 b3 67 ♔h6 ♜b8 68 ♜g7+ ♔h8 69 ♜h7+ ♔g8 70 ♙f7+ 1-0

### A virtuoso performance

Here is a very straightforward game that I find very pleasing. Maybe this is because it combines three types of positional combination? Balashov's bold attack employs the exchange sacrifice, the blocking/rupturing of the enemy pawn structure, *and* a quiet<sup>1</sup> clearance sacrifice.

**Y. Balashov – R. Sabianov**  
Kstovo 1994

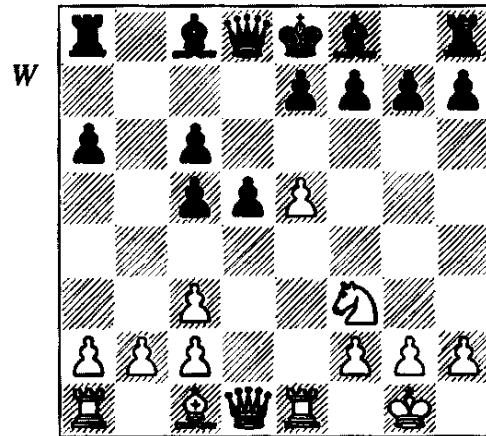
1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♙b5 a6 5 ♙xc6 bxc6 6 0-0 d6 7 e5 ♘d5 8 ♜e1 ♘xc3 9 dxc3 d5 (D)

10 e6!!

Preparing a heavy material investment at a startlingly early stage of the game. White gains the e5-square, and inflicts chronic congestion on Black's kingside.

10...♙xe6 11 ♜xe6 fxe6 12 ♘e5 ♜b6

Or: 12...g6 13 ♜f3 ♜c8 14 ♜f7+ ♔d8 15 ♙g5 planning ♙f6. Black's



paralysis is so acute that White can strengthen his position first with moves like ♜e1, or perhaps h4!?

12...♜c7 13 ♜h5+ g6 14 ♘xg6 hxg6 15 ♜xh8 might have been the lesser evil for Black, but he has no real compensation for the destruction of his kingside.

13 ♜g4!?

13 ♜h5+ was also strong.

13...♜d8 14 ♜xe6 ♜d6 15 ♜f7+ ♔d8 16 ♜f5 ♔e8

16...♔c7 17 ♘f7 ♜f6 18 ♜e5+; 16...e6 17 ♘f7+.

17 ♙g5

Preventing ...♜f6 and so threatening ♘f7.

17...g6 18 ♜f7+ ♔d8 19 ♜f3

Now ♘f7 will definitely win back the investment.

19...♜xb2 20 ♘f7+ ♔c7 21 ♜e1 ♜e6?!

Hoping to escape his difficulties by exploiting White's slightly weak back rank. It was hard to find stubborn moves: 21...♙g7 22 ♘xd6 ♙xc3 loses

1 Perhaps 'long-term' is a more accurate term than quiet. The point is that the knock-out or payoff is considerably delayed, and perhaps less certain, than in the tactical version of the sacrificial theme.

nicely after 23 ♖xe7+ ♔xd6 24 ♖g3+ ♕e5 25 ♖xe5!.

**22 ♖f4+!**

Prepares to interpose at c1, and leaves the rook on e6 stranded.

**1-0**

Black gave up in view of the lines 22...♔b6 23 ♖xe6 (23 ♖b8+ ♔a5 is less decisive thanks to the back-rank problems) 23...♖b1+ 24 ♖c1, 22...♖d6 23 ♔xd6 exd6 24 ♖f7+ and 22...♔d7 23 ♖g4.

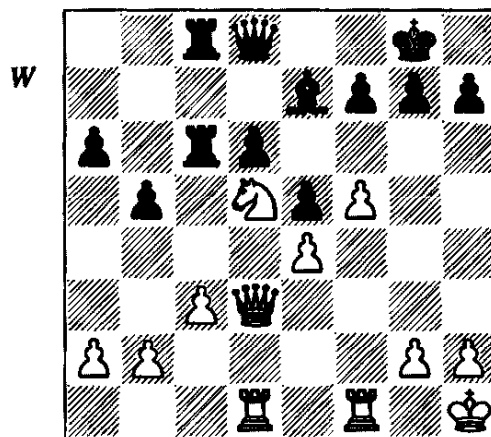
### Happy horses and rectilineal rooks

Here I will offer only a collection of time-tested phrases and general advice. Knights are relatively simple, well-behaved animals. The knight is happiest in congested positions, since its leaping ability allows it to function normally. Knights thrive in the centre, and need firm footing, usually provided by a pawn, or a square unassailable by an enemy pawn. They are the best of all pieces for blockading passed and isolated pawns, and the feeblest of pieces when dealing with outside (passed) pawns. The knight pair are never happy protecting each other. Then, they step on each other's hooves, and reduce their own range. When protecting each other they often become paralysed in this configuration. They are best when employed side by side, when they can influence a virtual barrier of squares.

The nature of the rook also fits in well with standard teaching. They belong on open files and behind passed pawns, pushing their own, or hindering

those of the opponent. The power of the rook increases dramatically in the ending, and the seventh rank is a rook's idea of heaven. Keep an eye out for the 'mysterious' rook move. Sometimes an optically closed file has tremendous potential – see the fragment Kasparov-Anand in Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice.

For a breathtaking yet simple example of finding a file, study this:



**R. Fischer – O. Gadia**  
*Mar del Plata 1960*

White's control of the d5-square and powerful knight give him a big advantage. However, the usual paradox of the backward d6-pawn exists. That is, occupying the d5-square prevents White from using the file for pressure. Fischer finds an elegant way to increase his influence in the position.

**1 ♖a1!! f6 2 a4 ♖b8??**

Funny how adversity can do this to a player. Either 2...♖c4 or 2...♖c5 was better, but Black has little to offer against the infiltration of the rook to a7, when Black has to guard the a-file, the b5-pawn and the seventh rank.

3 ♖xe7+ 1-0

3... ♜xe7 4 ♜d5+ wins a rook.

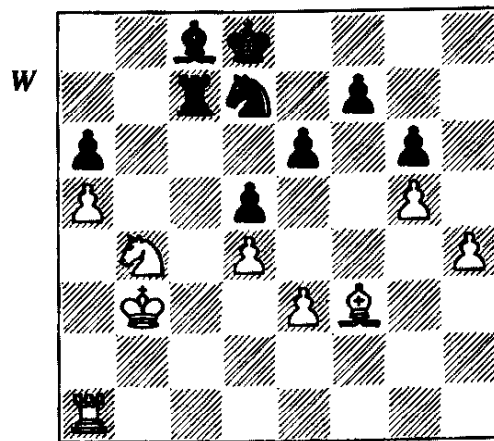
### Bishops, and their conversion to good

*"Yet there can be no doubt about it. Pawns which stand on the same colour as the bishop and so limit its mobility are a serious positional drawback, as pawns should help and not hinder the pieces." – Alexander Kotov, Think Like a Grandmaster*

The dynamic relationship between acquiring space, and the pawns used to do this being on the same colour of a bishop, is often misunderstood. Most players, even quite strong and experienced players, have a simplistic view that just because there are a lot of pawns in the way of a bishop, that bishop is, by definition, bad. While placing all of one's pawns on the same colour as those controlled by one's bishop clearly hampers a bishop, one should not overlook other properties (expansion potential, rigidity) of the pawn formation.

For some reason the learning or understanding process for many players ends when they absorb the simple rule that bishops thrive best when their pawns are on the other coloured squares. Well, bishops and their potential are a tricky matter. If it were a matter of simple arithmetic, counting up

how many pawns are in the way, chess might be an easy game. The Kotov quote above comes after an anecdote where the Argentinean GM Pilnik tried to convince Kotov to agree a draw in this position:



**A. Kotov – H. Pilnik**  
*Stockholm IZ 1952*  
 White to play

Kotov went on to win in textbook fashion by arranging the advance h5, recapturing on h5 with the bishop, and using the pressure against f7 to break down Black's defences. Kotov could not decide whether his opponent's declaration that his position was solid because his bishop defended all of his pawns was a joke or not<sup>1</sup>. He then formulated his version of the well-known advice for harmonious pawn placement, and showed a few classic examples of the problems caused by bad bishops.

1 My acquaintance with Pilnik left me with the impression that he was a joker. For one thing, he liked to reply to the stock farewell of "A pleasure to meet you" with the irreverent: "The pleasure has been all yours." We will also see that there is also an element of truth in Pilnik's assessment.

I will skip this part, since it seems to me that, if anything, this kind of treatment of the bishops is too well known. It is easy to find gruesome examples of a bishop entombed and suffocating behind stacks of its own pawns. Or to watch an unfettered colleague running rings around it. Just open any standard endgame book, and have a quick look at a typical example of such a mismatch in a bishop ending. This will show the rule in its pure form.

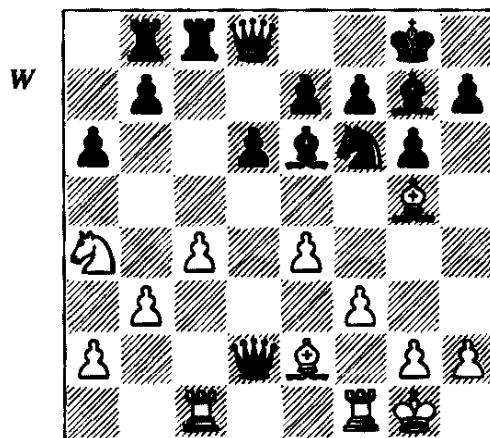
Pawn structures that seem to exercise a hypnotic and muddling effect on the brain's ability to judge the merit of a bishop are best illustrated by those seen on the white side of the Maroczy Bind<sup>1</sup>, and the black side of the Stonewall Dutch<sup>2</sup>, and how the light-squared bishops in those openings are often perceived.

In fact, the illusion applies to the 'bad' bishop's counterpart as well. The g2-bishop in the Stonewall bites on proverbial granite. For some reason, this vocation receives more respect than the career of the bishop patiently waiting behind the pawn chain. It is hard to understand why. We will see that there are solutions that even bad bishops can strive for.

There are of course remedies for the rock-biter. Pawn breaks can be prepared to chip away at the wall, and so eventually create a range of action for the bishop. But there is no guarantee for success, and such a bishop does

not necessarily have better chances of achieving gainful employment than its counterpart behind the wall. Time for some concrete examples.

### The bishop's relation to pawn structure – space and mobility



K. Frey – M. Andres  
Camaguey 1987

This fragment illustrates the simplest method of using a space advantage to release the potential of a bishop.

**16 c5!**

White expands, and either gains the key square c5, or broadens the horizons of his light-squared bishop.

**16...♖c6 17 ♖fd1 ♕e8 18 b4 b5 19 ♗c3 ♜b7 20 ♗d5 ♜f8 21 ♙h6 ♙xh6 22 ♜xh6+ ♜g8 23 ♜e3 ♜b8 (D)**

**24 f4**

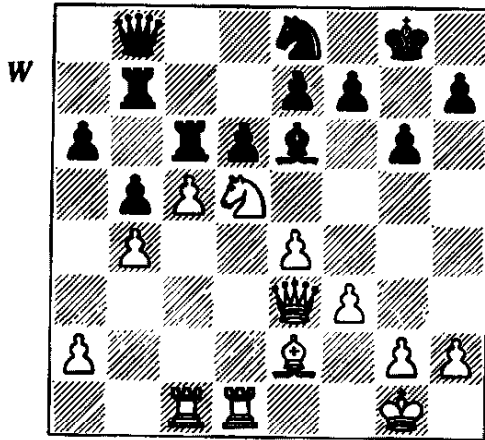
More of the same.

**24...dxc5 25 bxc5**

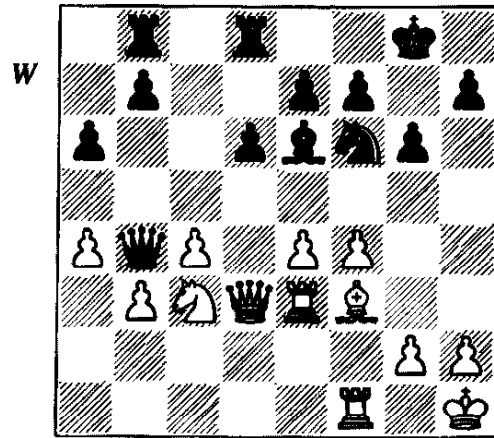
Now the possibility of ♗b4 elicits another favourable change in structure.

1 The pawn formation c4 + e4 in Sicilian type pawn structures.

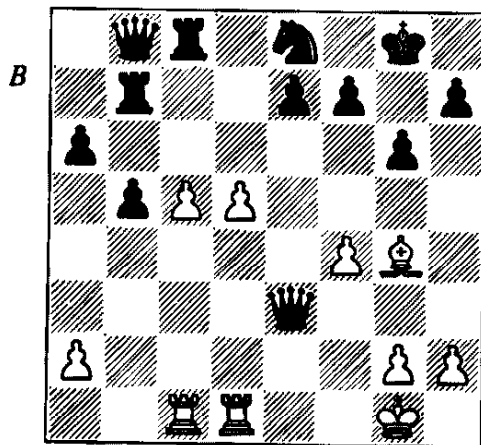
2 The pawn formation c6, d5, e6, f5.



25...Qxd5 26 exd5 Rxc8 27 Qg4  
(D)



J. Smejkal – W. Browne  
Milan 1975



This picture should be enough to convey the strength of White's position and the bishop unbound.

The next example shows almost every trump in the Maroczy Bind being used to unleash the potential of White's space advantage.

This is an excellent example of the latent power of White's often misunderstood bishop in the Maroczy Bind. The bishop's role is very often to act as a temporary guardian of its weak but cramping queenside pawns. Apart from being able to gradually open the

position at a later date, there are a number of ways White's spatial grip can be transformed into a pawn structure more hospitable to the light-squared bishop. White would argue that this is another example of the structure giving the apparently better black bishop nothing to bite on, while the space advantage offers various favourable developments for the white bishop.

21 f5!

An ugly move superficially, but in fact the beginning of a strategic combination.

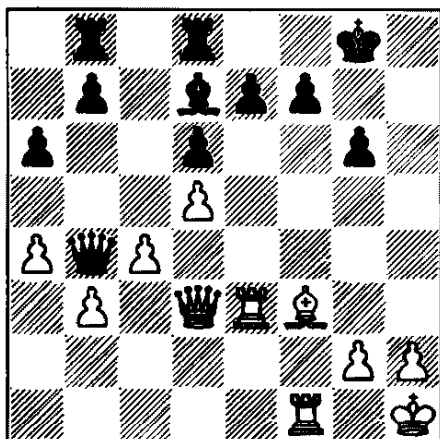
21...Qd7 22 fxg6

Oh dear. Now White has an ugly e-pawn and lessened his central influence – hasn't he?

22...hxc6 23 Qd5 Qxd5 24 exd5  
(D)

Metamorphosis complete. In fact, White has opened files for both rooks, improved the range of his bishop (which can now take aim at g6), and taken control of the board east of the d-file. The exploitation of the d5-square to gain the e-file and give the

B



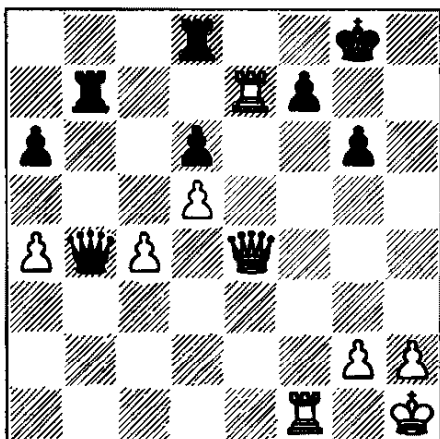
light-squared bishop elbow room is an essential Maroczy theme. Black is virtually lost.

**24...b5**

After 24...♙f5 25 ♙e4 White will invade on the e-, f- and h-files. Black instead tries to create some counter-targets and activate his b8-rook.

**25 ♜xe7 bxc4 26 bxc4 ♙f5 27 ♙e4 ♙xe4 28 ♚xe4 ♜b7 (D)**

W



**29 h4**

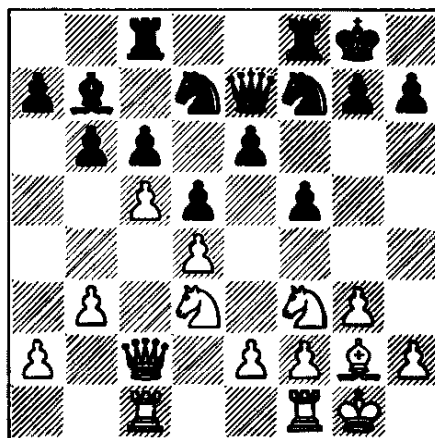
No back-rank tricks today. The h-pawn will also be used to pry open the black kingside even further.

**29...♜xe7 30 ♚xe7 ♜f8 31 ♜f4 a5 32 ♙h2 ♚c5 33 h5 ♚c8 1-0**

The black position is completely in ruins.

Now a look at a truly maligned defence and bishop, found in the Stonewall Dutch. Besides the old-fashioned method of trying to use the misunderstood bishop on h5, the guerrilla post of b7 and even a6 was slowly rediscovered.

B



**C. Ward – J. Tisdall**

*Saltsjöbaden Rilton Cup 1988*

**16...♙a6 17 ♘b4 ♙b7 18 ♘d3 g5!?**

Black could repeat moves to demonstrate that his bishop already had proved its worth by having the a6-f1 diagonal, but prefers to press forward and show the advantages of space that a Stonewall Dutch confers.

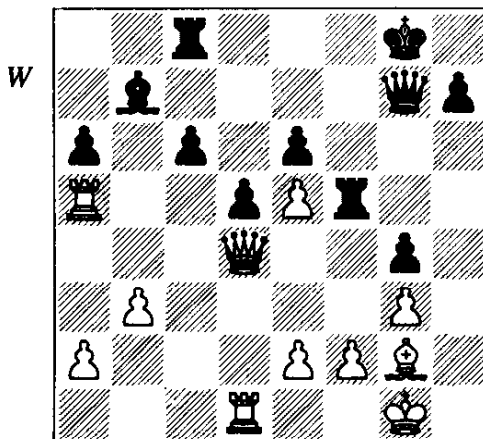
**19 ♜fd1 g4 20 ♘fe5?!**

White would prefer to keep the e5-square under control in order to prevent Black from using this square both to liberate his position and to undermine c5, but this proves to be a risky undertaking. After the game my opponent admitted that he could not take the risk seriously enough due to the visual impression given by the b7-bishop.

20...♖fxe5 21 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 22 dxe5  
♔g7

This is the point of Black's play. The e5- and f2-pawns are targets, an illustration of the possibility of utilizing the apparently worrying (for Black) lack of dark-squared bishops.

23 ♔b2 f4 24 ♔d4 fxg3 25 hxg3  
bxc5 26 ♖xc5 ♖f5 27 ♖a5 a6 (D)



Black's bishop could hardly be more hideous. But it does protect all his pawns... and the weakness of e5 is more important. White finds nothing better than a long-winded manoeuvre that results in ... the trade of bishops.

28 ♖a4 h5

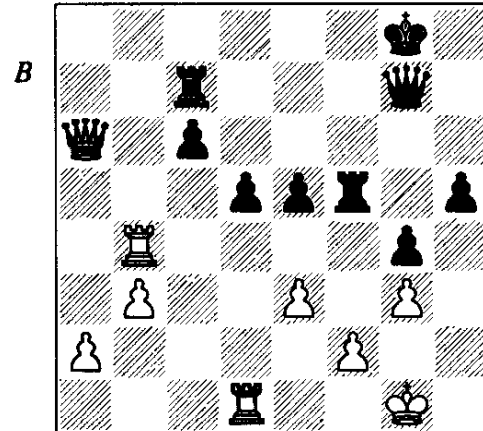
Now Black threatens to take full control with ...c5, which would emancipate the b7-bishop.

29 ♔a7 ♖xe5 30 ♖b4 ♖c7 31 e3  
♖f5 32 ♖f1 e5 33 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 34  
♔xa6 (D)

34...♔f8

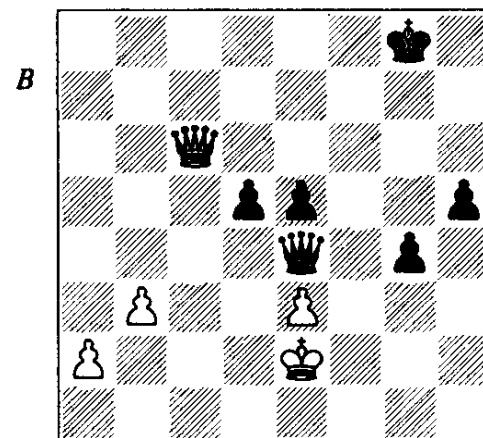
Now a race develops to exploit the weaknesses left by the bishop exchange.

35 ♖b7 ♖xb7 36 ♔xb7 ♖xf2 37  
♔xc6



White has also taken advantage of the absence of the b7-bishop, but it proves to be one move too late.

37...♖g2+! 38 ♔h1 ♖h2+ 39 ♔xh2  
♔f2+ 40 ♔h1 ♔f3+ 41 ♔h2 ♔e2+ 42  
♔g1 ♔xd1+ 43 ♔f2 ♔f3+ 44 ♔e1  
♔xg3+ 45 ♔d2 ♔g2+ 46 ♔d3 ♔e4+  
47 ♔e2 (D)



After a long forcing line, Black retains just enough king cover to win.

47...g3 48 ♔f6

48 ♔e8+ ♔g7 49 ♔xh5 ♔c2+ 50  
♔e1 (50 ♔f3 ♔d1+) 50...♔f2+ 51  
♔d1 ♔g1+ 52 ♔e2 ♔h2+ and wins.

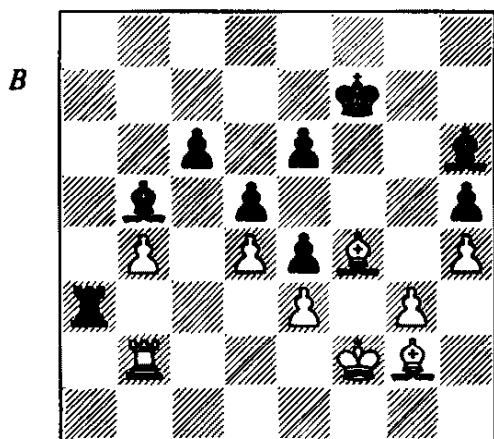
48...♔g4+ 49 ♔f1 ♔g7 50 ♔f3  
♔f7 51 ♔g2 ♔xf3+ 52 ♔xf3 d4 0-1

The white king cannot stop the h- and d-pawns.

### Relation to pawn chain

Even when a pawn structure is rigid, as in many lines of the French or King's Indian, the bishop walled in by the pawns is by no means to be labelled as scarred for life. In such positions, if the bishop escapes by a side exit, and emerges on the outside of the pawn chain, it often finds that the grass is indeed much greener on the other side. The fixed nature of the pawn skeleton can then provide wide-open spaces and strong outposts.

First, let's have a look at a pure example of this phenomenon, in the relatively uncluttered setting of an endgame.



**J. Tisdall – S. Dolmatov**  
*Bern 1994*

**48...♗xf4!**

Optically this may seem to be a sin – trading off a good bishop for a bad one. But that is a superficial assessment. In fact, Black's b5-bishop is much stronger than the g2-bishop. Black eliminates the white bishop that is *outside the pawn chain* and keeps

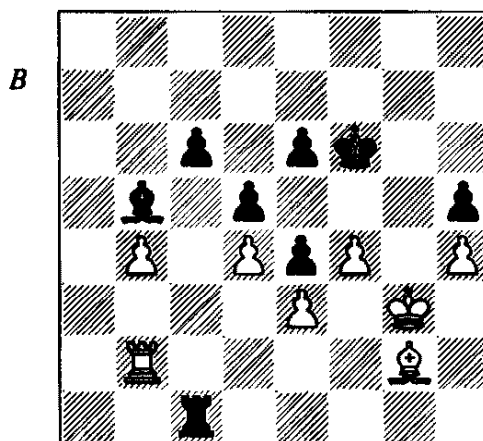
the one he has which is outside his pawn chain. This is a very clear example of how the bishops co-operate with pawn structure. Evaluating the bishops by which colours the pawns are on gives a completely mistaken assessment.

48...♗f8 would be less accurate. After 49 ♖h3! ♜a4 50 g4 hxg4 51 ♗xg4 White's h-pawn provides real counterplay – Black's extra pawn will not be mobile for a long time.

**49 gxf4**

Though Black's pawns are all on light squares, the real effect is that the black pawns stifle the white bishop. Black's bishop has great influence while White can hardly move his. Also, with the material left now, it is harder for White to defend his pawns. Here we see the truth behind the possibly confused assessment by Pilnik. Sometimes it helps to have a bishop that protects all one's pawns.

49...♗f6 50 ♖h3 ♜a1 51 ♗g2 ♜c1 52 ♗g3 (D)



**52...♗f1!**

Fine technique. Now we see yet another element of the bishop/pawn



structure connection. The exchange of bishops leaves a sea of weak light squares in its wake.

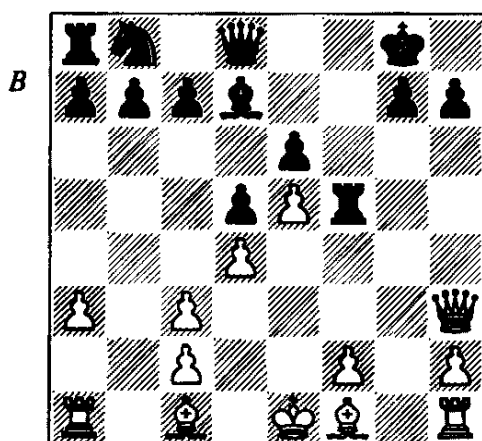
53 ♖a2 ♗xg2 54 ♖xg2

This leaves White with a horribly passive rook but hopes to hinder the invasion of the black king. However, this can only be postponed.

54...♗h1 55 ♖h2 ♖b1 56 ♔f2 ♔f5 57 ♔g3 ♖xb4 0-1

White resigned in disgust. A very instructive ending, and child's play for a technician of Sergei Dolmatov's calibre.

### More Dolmatov



**A. Martin Gonzalez – S. Dolmatov**  
*Barcelona 1983*

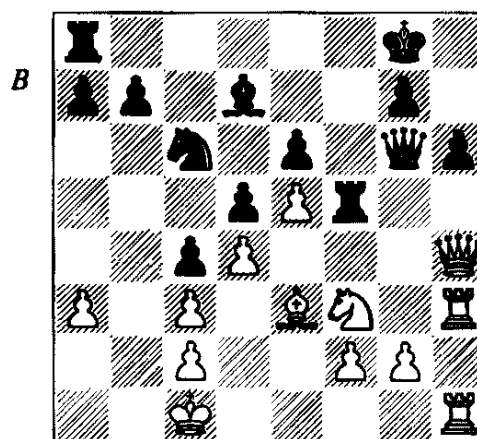
Here we have a fairly common position-type arising from the French Defence. White aims to attack on the kingside, and Black has the proverbially bad bishop associated with this opening. Black solves his strategic problems by getting this piece outside his pawn chain.

1...♗e8!! 2 ♗d3 ♗g6 3 ♖g1 ♔f8 4 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 5 ♔f3 ♔c6

Black now has tremendous compensation for the exchange. The c4-square beckons for the knight and he dominates the light squares for all time. In the meantime, the absence of White's best bishop also reduces his attacking hopes to virtually nil, making his position rather passive and very difficult to play in practice. Dolmatov methodically increased his grip on the game and won in convincing fashion.

Although White also has an unopposed bishop, it has no correspondingly active outpost, and it languished on c1 until the game was beyond salvation. This kind of domination of a colour complex is a very common theme behind positional exchange sacrifices.

### Bad bishop?



**E. Mortensen – L. Karlsson**  
*Esbjerg 1988*

Here is a clearly related example, from the same type of opening. White is massing his heavy pieces for an attack, and has just lifted his rook to the

third rank. The arrival of a rook on the g-file seems to spell a powerful white assault.

20...♖xf3!! 21 ♖xf3

21 gxf3 loses in exactly the same way; see next note.

21...♘b4!! 0-1

It is not difficult to see that all lines end in mate: 22 ♔d2 ♜xc2+ 23 ♔e1 ♘d3+ (if White had played 21 gxf3 then Black would win with 23...♜b1+! instead, preventing the king from escaping via g2) 24 ♔f1 ♜d1#, or 22 axb4 ♙a4 23 ♔b2 (23 ♔d2 ♜xc2+ 24 ♔e1 ♜d1#) 23...♜xc2+ 24 ♔a1 ♙b3.

I now leave it to the reader to ponder the status of the French bishop and other maligned clergymen.

One can think of other examples, or find them, in other openings that feature this kind of fixed structure and suffering prelate. In the King's Indian, the emergence of Black's dark-squared bishop can have similar dramatic effects on the game.

Another consideration in such structures to consider: it is often difficult to prevent the emergence of such a repressed bishop. If the bishop suddenly escapes and becomes strong, conventional text-book wisdom would suggest exchanging it off. But this tends to leave a network of weak squares behind, as seen in my game with Dolmatov. This is also the reason why it can be hard to keep such optically bad bishops under house arrest. When the bishop does begin to emerge, the opponent often faces a choice of evils:

allow the bishop to grow dramatically in strength, or to risk the weakening of a colour complex.

In the French examples above, Black gave up the exchange to highlight this kind of weakness. It is not hard to see that a simple exchange of bishops would have had similar results. Less dramatic control of the light squares to be sure, but at no material cost. You get what you pay for.

Before I begin to wonder if we have been discussing issues concerning bishops, or instead subtle details of pawn structure, I will move on to the next topic. I hope that now the reader has more sense for the Russian chess proverb, *"Even the worst bishop is better than the best knight"*.<sup>1</sup>

## The bishop pair

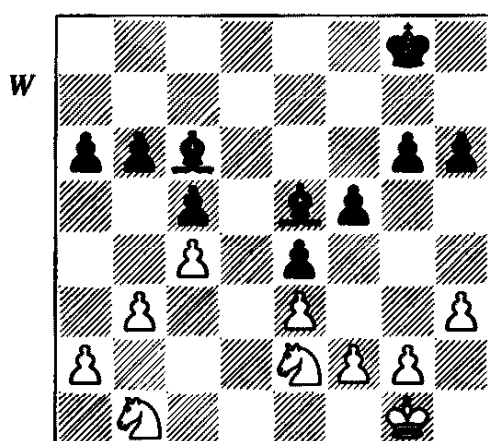
The bishop pair has become an over-worked expression. Everyone knows they should have one, but what exactly does one do with them? It often takes a while before a position opens up to the extent where one can fully use and enjoy a healthy pair of bishops, and usually one is struggling to increase their scope. If readers wondered about things like pawn placement to enhance two bishops (what colour do you put pawns on when you have two bishops?), I hope the preceding section helped somewhat.

When the bishops as a team come into the fore, it is often after pawn exchanges, and a bit more room to

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1 I couldn't disagree with this more, but at least I know what they mean.

roam. With this in mind, I will present two endgames, which show the basic properties of this duo. Naturally, there are many other situations where the bishop pair can shine – bearing down on the enemy king is one. It is in the ending, though, that one can get a clearer sense of how they thrive together, and why they tend to overpower lesser opposition.



**M. Denoth – C. Lutz**  
*Bern Open 1994*

Here we will examine a very simple exploitation of the bishop pair. Black's advantage is compounded by his superior board control (space) and most importantly, the lack of secure outposts for the knights. Knights without securely protected posts, provided by the pawn-structure, suffer even more than usual in duels against bishops. This example helps show the relative strengths of the respective minor pieces, precisely because it is such a lopsided battle.

31 ♖f1 b5 32 ♘d2 ♜f7 33 ♜e1 g5

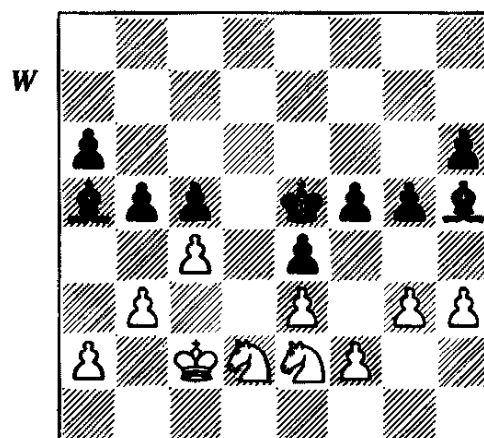
Black has an obvious space advantage in any case, but the strength of the

bishop pair allows him to increase this at will.

34 g3 ♜e6 35 ♜f1 ♜c7 36 ♜e1 ♜e5 37 ♜d1 ♜d8

Now the bishops bounce into position via the back rank, a good illustration of their ability to influence the game actively, even from distant outposts.

38 ♜e1 ♜a5 39 ♜d1 ♜e8 40 ♜c2 ♜h5 (D)



An eloquent picture. Now the second part of the technical phase takes place: Black breaks up his pair in order to reach a good bishop vs fairly feeble knight endgame.

41 ♘c3 ♜xc3 42 ♜xc3 b4+

Lutz annexes a bit more space and fixes the queenside pawns on light squares. This means that the white queenside is a potential meal when Black manages to get his bishop into the position.

43 ♜c2 ♜e2 44 ♜c1 h5 45 ♜c2 h4

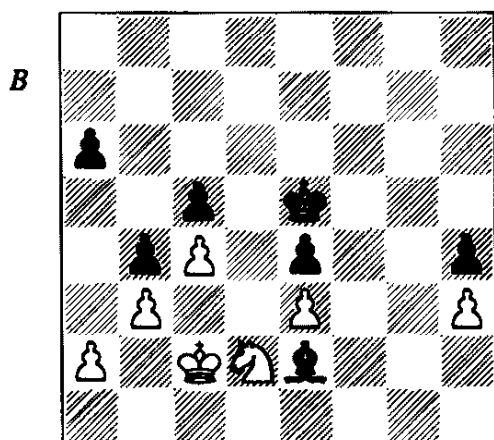
The final phase begins. Now Black needs points of entry, and this is accomplished by pawn trades. Although exchanging pawns favours the defender in an abstract way, the creation

of invasion points favours the more active pieces, and Black has a 2-0 lead in that department.

46 gxh4

White must take, otherwise Black breaks through with ...hxc3 and ...f4.

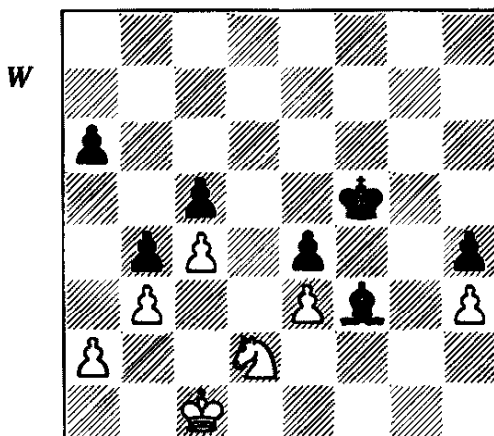
46...gxh4 47 ♖c1 f4 48 ♖c2 fxe3 49 fxe3 (D)



Although Black's king does not yet have a way in, his persistent space advantage and the outpost on f3 will solve this problem.

49...♙f5 50 ♖c1 ♜f3! (D)

Now the h-pawn falls, and this will provide the distraction Black needs to stretch White's makeshift fortress to the breaking point.



51 ♜f1

51 ♜xf3 exf3 52 ♔d1 ♙e4 53 ♔d2 a5 is the simplest way to win the pawn ending for Black.

51...♙g2 52 ♜h2

This is not an impressive square but White has to prevent the black king from invading after the h3-pawn falls.

52...♙xh3 53 ♔d2 ♙g4 54 ♙e1 ♙f3 55 ♔f2 ♙d1

The bishop prepares to sit down for dinner, the table having been set on move 42.

56 ♙e1 ♙c2 57 ♔d2 ♙d3

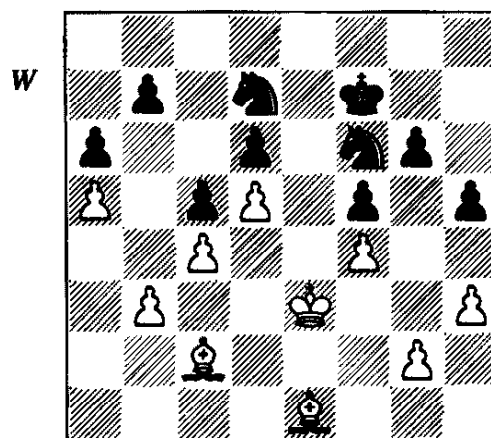
57...♙b1 58 ♔c1 ♙xa2 59 ♔b2 would cause complications due to bad table manners. There is no hurry; the feast is served soon enough.

58 ♙e1 ♔g5 59 ♔f2 a5

59...♙b1 60 ♜f1 ♙xa2 61 ♜d2 ♔f5 was sufficient, but Black prefers to keep everything neat.

60 ♔g2 a4 and White resigned before his queenside was physically removed (0-1).

### A tougher nut



W. Uhlmann – S. Gligorić  
Hastings 1971

This game won a special prize for the best ending of the tournament. It is a classic. It demonstrates the two essential advantages of the bishop pair, especially true in endings. First, that the strength of the bishops increases with pawn exchanges. This is particularly venomous, as the most common defensive ploy in an inferior ending is to exchange pawns to increase drawing chances. Secondly, the timely exchange of one of the bishops to reach a favourable single ♗ vs ♘ ending.

**1 b4! cxb4**

Black cannot maintain control over the d4-square. After 1...♖e7 2 bxc5 dxc5 3 ♗c3 ♖d6 4 ♗d3 Black is in a kind of zugzwang, and must allow the kingside breakthrough, e.g. 4...♘e8 5 g4!. Note that we see once again the unwieldy nature of knights that have been reduced to protecting each other.

**2 ♗xb4 ♘c5 3 ♖d4 ♘fd7 4 ♗d1**

White needs to open things up, and the g4 advance fits the bill. Although Black's position looks solid, and the basic nature of the game is closed, these features cannot be maintained.

**4...♖e7 5 g4 hxg4 6 hxg4 ♖f6 7 ♖e3!**

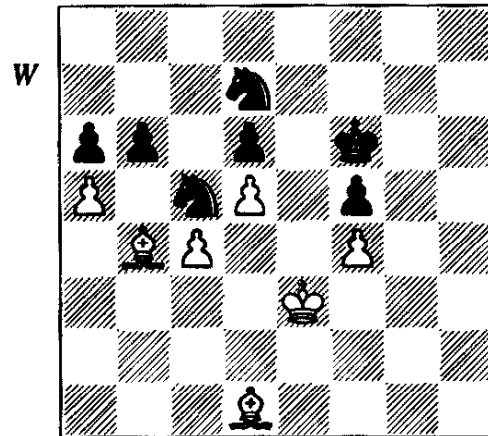
A nasty little move that opens the long diagonal, so that White may evict the black king by a check on c3 or b2.

**7...b6**

Black poses a problem. In any case, there was nothing to be gained by waiting: 7...♖f7 8 gxf5 gxf5 9 ♗h5+ ♖e7 (9...♖f6 10 ♗e8 ♖e7 11 ♗g6 reaches the same position) 10 ♗g6 ♖f6 11 ♗h7 ♘e4 12 ♗a3 and ♗b2+ forces Black away from the f5-pawn.

Or 7...♘e4 8 gxf5 gxf5 9 ♗h5 again planning ♗a3-b2+.

**8 gxf5 gxf5 (D)**



**9 ♗xc5!**

Note again the timely exchange of one of the bishops. This device does not spring immediately to mind here since the light-squared bishop does not appear to be the one worth keeping, but the possibility of ♗a4 and the target on f5 justify the decision.

**9...♘xc5**

9...dxc5 10 ♗a4 ♖e7 11 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 12 axb6 ♖c8 13 d6 wins easily for White. After 9...bxc5 10 ♗a4 the white bishop proves its dominance: 10...♖e7 (10...♘f8 11 ♗c6 and ♗b7; 10...♘b8? 11 ♖f3 ♖g6 12 ♖g3 ♖h5 13 ♗e8+ ♖h6 14 ♖h4 and f5 falls while Black remains a 'piece down') 11 ♖f3 ♘f6 12 ♗c2 and f5 falls.

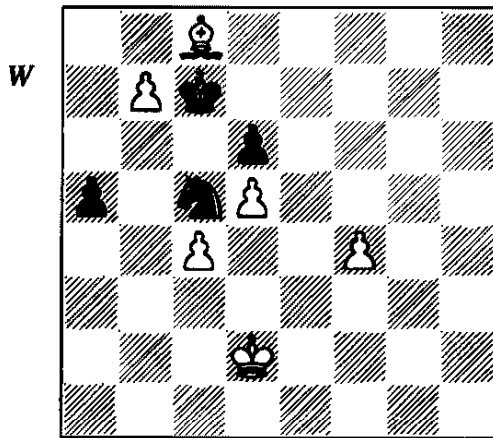
**10 axb6 a5 11 ♗c2 ♖e7**

**11...a4? 12 ♗xa4.**

**12 ♖d2!**

Not allowing the a-pawn to advance, and preparing ♖a3 and then ♗a4. The rest is simple.

**12...♖d8 13 ♗xf5 ♖a4 14 b7 ♖c7 15 ♗c8 ♘c5 (D)**



16 f5 ♖e4+ 17 ♔c2 ♗b8 18 ♗b3  
 ♜d2+ 19 ♗a4 ♜xc4 20 f6 ♜e5 21  
 ♗xa5 1-0

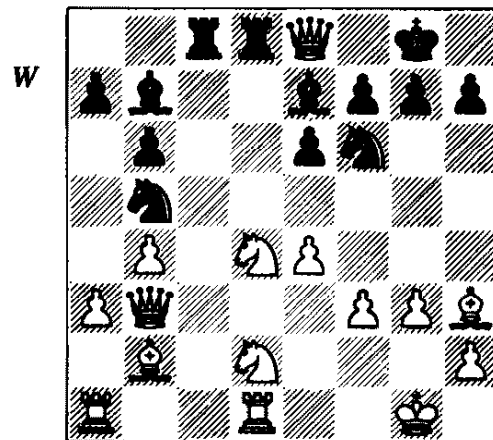
### Rook versus knight and bishop

This particular duel constitutes one of the most common but nevertheless difficult imbalances to assess. I can remember that I had a very exaggerated sense of the power of two minor pieces against a rook and pawn. My education lacked an understanding of how much stronger the rook became in an ending, and I can clearly remember having to learn this by trial and error as a youngster. This can be most drastically seen when a bishop and knight battle against rook and two pawns. Often this is decided in the favour of the pieces in a complicated middle-game. In an ending, a rook and two pawns tend to steamroll a bishop and a knight.

All of these kinds of imbalances (for example three minor pieces versus a queen) tend to favour the majority earlier in the game, when the pieces can team up on targets, and either win them or chase the more

valuable but outnumbered piece away. However, as the game simplifies, the strong piece increases noticeably in strength. Pawns on the side of the outnumbered piece have two key roles. The first is to displace the enemy forces and drive them from active posts. The second is to play an active role themselves as passed pawns, and again this becomes more marked as the position simplifies and it becomes easier to push them, and to risk exposing the king more.

To have a look at the dynamics of ♖ + ♜ vs ♗ + ♞(s), I have chosen two opening variations which feature this material situation. First, though, an independent example that shows some of our factors in action.



**I. Farago – A. Grosar**

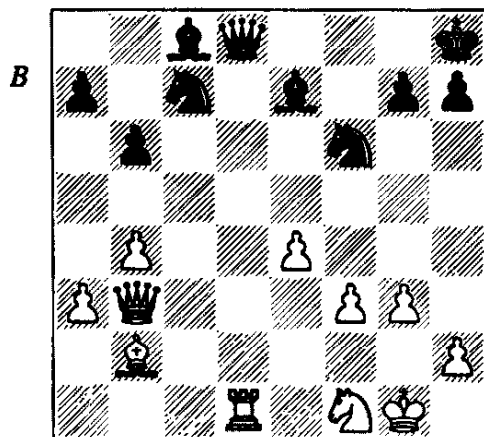
*Portorož Vidmar Memorial 1993*

21 ♜xe6! fxe6 22 ♖xe6+ ♗h8 23  
 ♖xc8 ♖xc8

If 23... ♗xc8, 24 ♗ac1 ♗xc1 25 ♗xc1 planning to roll Black back with a4. Throughout this game the disparity in the pawn count makes itself felt in the lack of secure squares for the minor

pieces. Black does not have the pawns necessary to create footholds in the position, and White's pawns can advance and wreak havoc in their wake. We have mentioned the necessity of secure outposts when discussing the needs of knights, and this issue is central to any duel between pawns and minor pieces.

24  $\text{Qf1}$   $\text{Qc7}$  25  $\text{Rxd8}$   $\text{Wxd8}$  26  $\text{Rd1}$  (D)



26...  $\text{We8}$

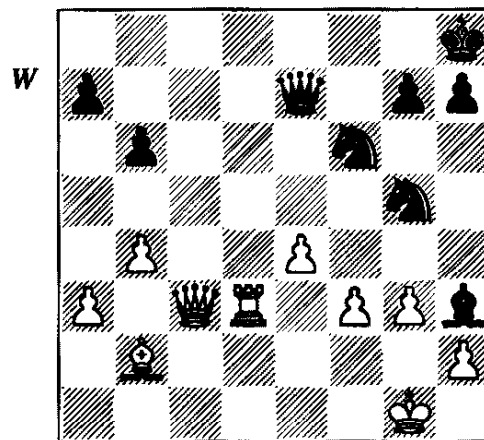
26...  $\text{Wf8}$  was a bit tougher to crack, since it keeps more pressure on f3.

a) One instructive way to misplay the position is 27 e5?!, when 27...  $\text{Qfe8}$  planning ...  $\text{Le6}$  obviously improves Black's chances as White has cheapened the value of his pawns by weakening the light squares.

b) 27  $\text{Qe3}$ !? is still a sensible move.

c) Perhaps simplest is Dautov's suggestion 27  $\text{Wc3}$   $\text{Qe6}$  28  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Qg5}$  29  $\text{Qf5}$   $\text{Lxf5}$  30  $\text{exf5}$   $\text{Wa8}$  31  $\text{Qg2}$ , which maintains White's advantage since he is now ready to play h4 and then invade with his major pieces.

27  $\text{Wc3}$   $\text{Qe6}$  28  $\text{Qe3}$   $\text{Qg5}$  29  $\text{Qd5}$   $\text{Lh3}$  30  $\text{Rd3}$   $\text{Wf8}$  31  $\text{Qxe7}$   $\text{Wxe7}$  (D)



32  $\text{We5}$   $\text{Wxe5}$

32...  $\text{Qe6}$ ? gives White a pleasant choice between advancing his f- or g-pawn.

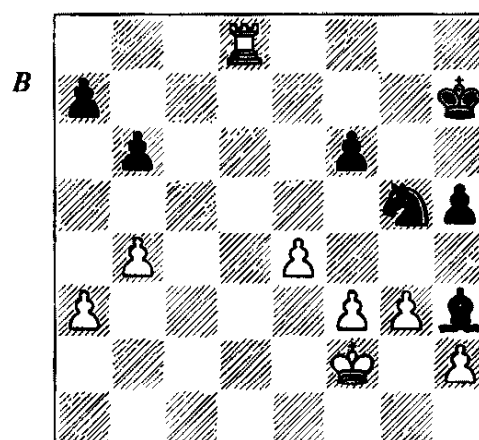
33  $\text{Lxe5}$  h5

To prevent g4 entombing the black bishop on h3. 33...  $\text{Qd7}$  34 g4 h6 35  $\text{Lf4}$   $\text{Qf8}$  36  $\text{Lxg5}$   $\text{hxg5}$  37  $\text{Rd8}$   $\text{Qg8}$  38  $\text{La8}$  is even worse than the game.

34  $\text{Rd8+}$   $\text{Qh7}$  35  $\text{Lxf6}$   $\text{gxf6}$

Re-establishing the material balance that we wish to examine.

36  $\text{Qf2}$  (D)



White wins easily. Not only do the two pawns already in his possession grant him a clear material plus, the minor pieces cannot cope with the rook's mobility. Even with a white pawn less

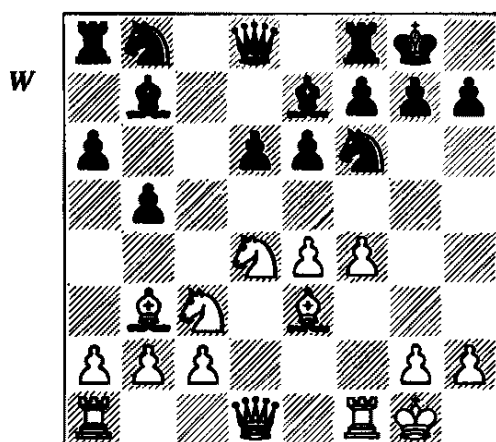
on the kingside this would be a typical example of how a rook overpowers two minor pieces in an ending. The black queenside is too vulnerable, and White will fashion a pawn majority here as well. This kind of defensive task is often beyond the capacity of the pieces, who are very dependent on the king to provide them with solid outposts against such invasions.

36...♙e6 37 ♖a8 b5 38 ♖xa7+ ♗g6 39 a4 bxa4 40 b5 ♘f7 41 b6 ♘d6 42 b7 ♘xb7 43 ♖xb7 a3 44 ♖a7 a2 45 ♗e3 and after some unnecessary 'resistance' Black eventually resigned.

Now on to our opening selections.

### Sicilian Najdorf, Sozin Attack

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙c4 e6 7 ♙b3 b5 8 0-0 ♙e7 9 f4 ♙b7 10 ♙e3 0-0 (D)



Here theory does not rate the bishop sacrifice on e6. However, if you plug this position into a computer, it will assess the move 11 ♙xe6 rather highly. This is a typical example of the

purely numerical thinking from chess-playing programs. Accepted (human) wisdom here is that the minor pieces will have much more to say than the rook in the interval between middle-game and ending. I can remember that one could often expect to see moves like ♙xe6 in weekend tournaments.

At the level of GM-authored opening books, or annotations, such moves are not even mentioned. Of course, in the Deep Blue era, we should perhaps be prepared to reassess our values ... at least if the machines insist on playing such moves after long 'thought'.

The area of compensation and dynamic material balance lends itself very well to computer assistance, especially now that most players have access to programs of considerable strength. Since these monsters assess primarily by piece value, we can at least see who is supposed to 'be ahead' and experiment with ways to prove the worth of what we deem to be compensatory factors.

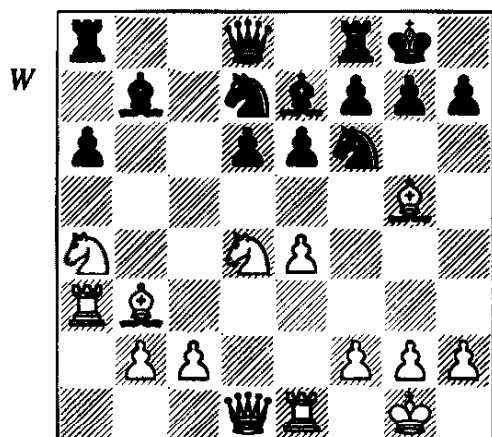
N. Short – L. van Wely  
*Garmisch rapid 1994*

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙c4 e6 7 0-0 b5 8 ♙b3 b4 9 ♘a4 ♙b7 10 ♙g5 ♘bd7 11 ♖e1 ♙e7 12 a3 bxa3 13 ♖xa3 0-0 (D)

14 ♙xe6!?

I doubt that Short would have played this in a tournament game. But maybe – since he is often prepared to risk pressure for long-term material gain. There are a few factors that





could convince White that this was worth a try here. It is clearly a better version than the 'unthinkable' one referred to in the opening position above. White's g5-bishop and swinging rook on the third rank give the appearance of providing active play. Another consideration is that the e4-pawn is not as weak as usual, for several reasons. The undermining ...b4 advance is not possible here, and the solid option of f2-f3 exists for White. Nevertheless, Van Wely finds a plan that produces the kind of active piece play typical of such positions, and could have provided another example of why such a material imbalance tends to favour the pieces at this stage of the game.

14...fxe6 15 ♖xe6 ♔e8

15...♔a5 16 ♖ac5!.

16 ♜g3?!

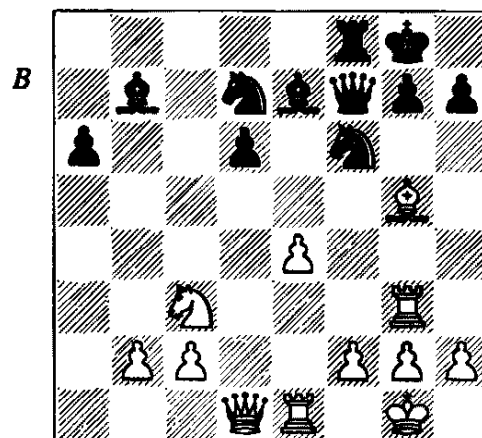
Now it becomes awkward to play f3, which would shut in the rook, and as a result of potential pressure against f2, Black generates attacking chances. 16 ♖xf8 at once was better.

16...♔f7

The bold 16...♖xe4 can be refuted by a very nice tactical sequence: 17

♖xe7 ♖xg3 18 ♖xf8! ♖xf8 19 ♖ec5! and White wins material.

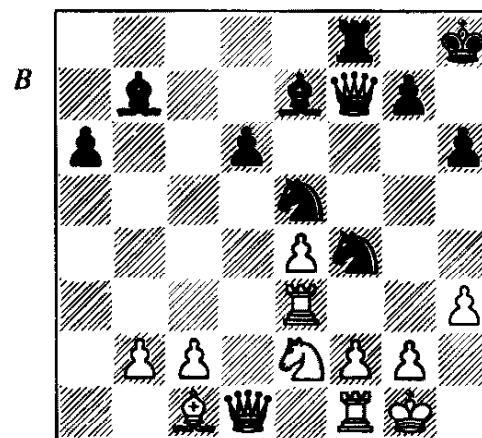
17 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 18 ♖c3 (D)



18...♖h8!

A fine move that prevents White from using the g-file actively. Now Black is ready to drive White's apparently aggressive forces back in confusion.

19 h3 h6 20 ♖c1 ♖e5 21 ♜ge3 ♖h5 22 ♜f1 ♖f4 23 ♖e2 (D)



23...g5?

23...♖xg2! 24 ♖xg2 ♖xe4+ 25 f3 ♖xf3+ would have given Black a ferocious attack, e.g. 26 ♖h2 ♔h5. Well, such swings of fortune are not unexpected in rapid chess. In any case,

this game fragment shows how the pieces often have the upper hand as long as the game remains complex. After all, the material is not really in balance, and only the positional factors will determine which side has made the better transaction. The game continued:

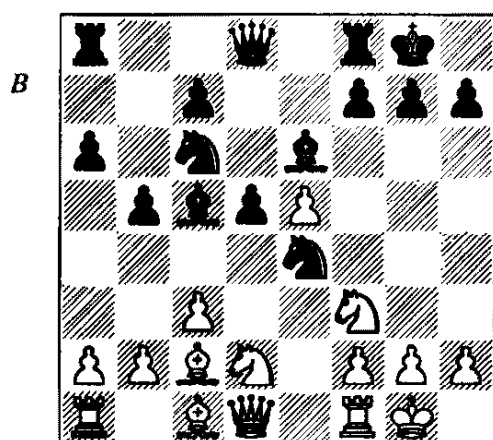
24 ♖g3 ♙c8 25 ♜c3! ♙e6 26 ♜c7

White gradually neutralized Black's initiative and went on to win.

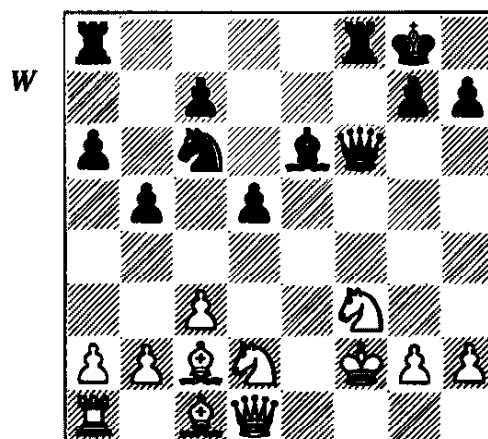
Now we will examine an opening variation that depends entirely on the shifting balance between a bishop and knight versus a rook and pawn(s).

**I. Morović – A. Yusupov**  
*Tunis IZ 1985*

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4  
♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♙b3 d5 8  
dxe5 ♙e6 9 c3 ♙c5 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11  
♙c2 (D)



Here the Dilworth Attack in the Open Spanish is introduced by the aggressive continuation 11...♘xf2!? 12 ♜xf2 f6 13 exf6 ♙xf2+ 14 ♙xf2 ♚xf6 (D).

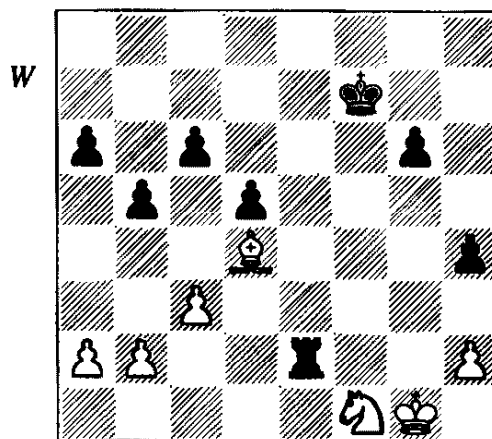
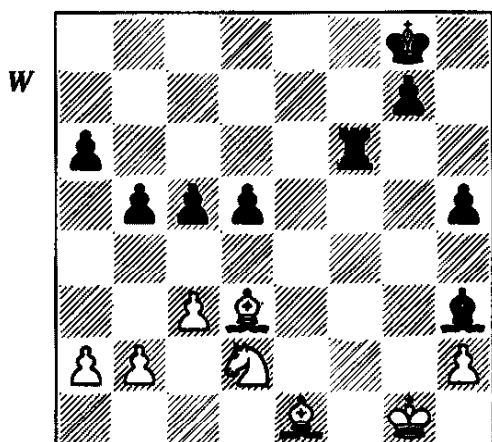


At first sight, this sacrifice looks too primitive to be dangerous. Surely if the offer in the Sozin Sicilian Najdorf gave the minor pieces excellent chances against a rook and two pawns, this must be far less promising? Well, after much theory and practice, Black seems to be doing fine in this position.

I will try to explain the general considerations at work here. The white king is more exposed than may appear at a casual glance, and often White must invest a pawn to establish something resembling calm around the seat of his monarch. The most sensitive point in the white camp is the f3-square, and Black is well placed to increase the pressure here with ...♘e5 or ...♙g4.

The most important factor, though, is that White lags behind in development, while Black needs only to play ...♜ae8 in order to have a full attacking force in action. My guess is that it is Black's lead in development alone which originally tempted players to make this sacrifice.

Continuing to compile our list of relevant positional factors here, the open nature of the position makes it

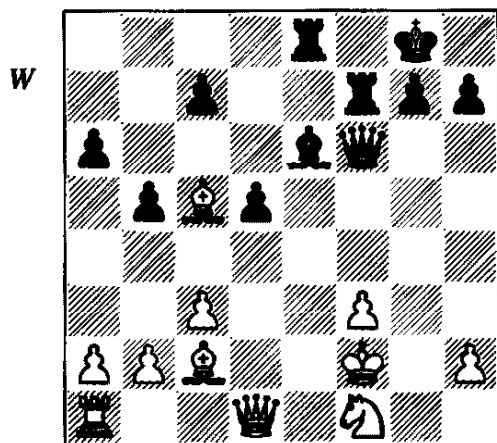


Now the blockade of Black's extra pawns only delays the end. I give the winning process, because it shows an instructive methodical breakdown of the white position: 30 b4 ♖xa2 31 h3 ♕e6 32 ♜e3 a5 33 bxa5 ♖xa5 34 ♔f2 ♕d6 35 ♙f6 ♖a4 36 ♕e2 b4 37 cxb4 ♖xb4 38 ♜g4 ♖b3 39 ♜f2 c5 40 ♙xh4

d4 41 ♖g5 c4 42 h4 ♔e5 43 ♜h3? 0-1.

15...♞e5 16 ♔g1

Another digression: 16 ♖e3!? ♜ae8 17 ♖c5 ♞xf3 18 gxf3 ♜f7 (D).

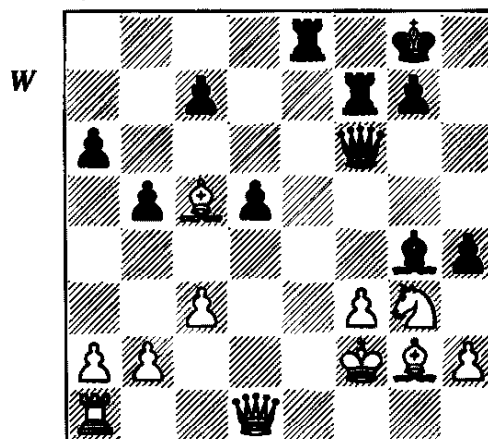


The evolution of the Dilworth Attack rates this as one of the opening's key positions.

a) 19 ♞g3! ♖g4 20 ♔g1 ♜xf3 21 ♜xf3 ♖xf3? (21...♜xf3! would lead to the classic Dilworth battle and roughly balanced chances) 22 ♜f1! ♜f6 23 b4! c6, Ivanchuk-Yusupov, Linares 1990, and now 24 ♖d4! ♜f4 25 ♖f5 with the threat of ♖d7, combined with Black's awkward pieces on the f-file, would have given White a big advantage.

b) 19 ♖d3 ♖h3! 20 ♞g3 h5 21 ♖f1 (21 ♞xh5? ♜g5 22 ♞g3 d4! {threatening the bishop and mate on e3} 23 ♖xd4 c5, Yusupov, is a nice variation that should show us again how important the control of these dark squares is) 21...♖g4 22 ♖g2 h4 (D).

Black had a strong kingside attack, and went on to win, in the game Short-Yusupov, Belgrade 1989. This type of

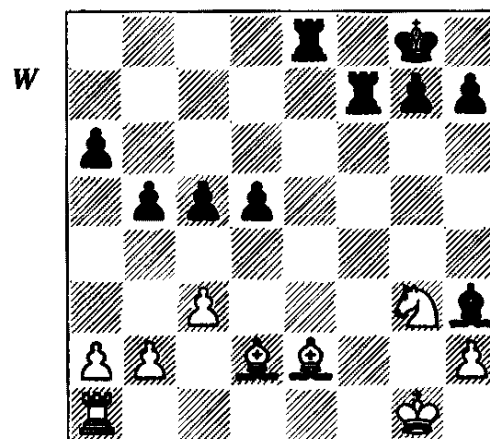


development is important, since Black must be able to justify his initiative in a complex position.

16...♞xf3+ 17 gxf3 ♜xf3 18 ♜xf3 ♜xf3 19 ♖d1 ♜f7 20 ♞g3

20 ♖e3 ♖h3 21 ♖b3 c6 22 ♖d4 ♜e8 transposes, more or less, to Geller-Chekhov.

20...♖h3 21 ♖e2 ♜e8 22 ♖d2 c5 (D)



As ever, this advance spells black achievement, and Yusupov now rates Black's chances as objectively better.

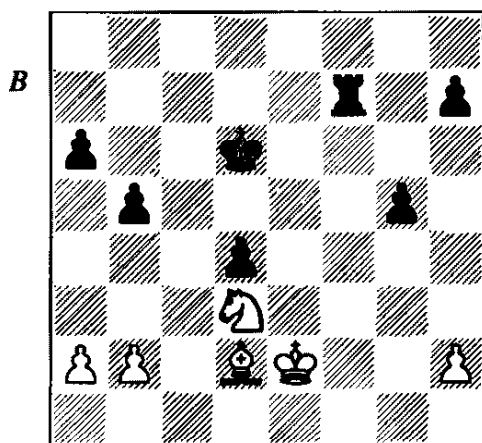
23 ♖f1

23 a4 bxa4 24 ♖xa6 (24 ♜xa4?? ♜xe2 25 ♞xe2 ♜f1#) 24...c4 and the white bishop on a6 is cut off from the game.

23...♙xf1 24 ♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 25 ♔xf1  
♙f7 26 ♔f2 ♙e6 27 ♙e3 ♖f8+ 28  
♙e2 ♔d6 29 ♘h5 ♖f7

Black sidesteps a diabolical trap:  
29...g5? 30 ♙xg5 ♖f5 31 ♙f4+ ♔d7  
32 ♙f3!! and if 32...♖xh5, 33 ♙g4  
traps the rook.

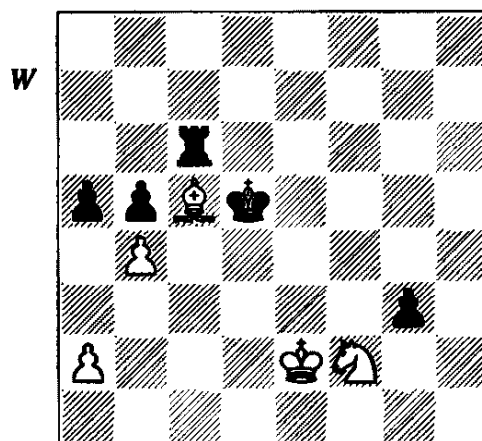
30 ♔f4 d4 31 cxd4 cxd4 32 ♙d2  
g5 33 ♔d3 (D)



Now 33...h6 would have consolidated Black's advantage. His pawns restrain the white pieces, and he can slowly aim to infiltrate with his king, and pressure the pawns on the second rank. White is hindered by the lack of secure footholds for his minor pieces. For the moment they work together, but as soon as the action spreads to the flanks, they will find it problematic to cooperate together, and to switch attention from side to side.

In the game Yusupov continued with 33...g4?, which gave White more room to manoeuvre, as well as making it difficult to mobilize his kingside pawns, factors which should have allowed White to defend successfully. Nevertheless, White found the chore too demanding, and Black eventually

reached the following instructive position (D):



Black has returned a pawn in order to create the kind of wide-open terrain rooks love. Although material is greatly reduced, there is still enough left on each flank to give White headaches.

45 ♔d3

Yusupov prefers 45 ♔g4 ♙e4 46 ♔e3 axb4 47 ♙xb4 ♖h6 but this looks grim for White to me, e.g. 48 ♔g2 ♖f6 49 ♙e1 (49 ♙c5 ♖c6) 49...♖a6! and the a-pawn falls as 50 ♙xg3 ♖xa2+ 51 ♙f1 ♙f3 wins for Black.

45...axb4 46 ♙e3 ♖c2+ 47 ♙d1 ♖c3 48 ♙e2 ♙e4 49 ♔c5+ ♙f5 50 ♔d3 ♙e4 51 ♔c5+ ♙d5 52 ♔d3 ♖c2+ 53 ♙d1 ♖h2 54 ♙g1 ♖h1 55 ♔f4+ ♙e4 56 ♔e2 ♙f3 0-1

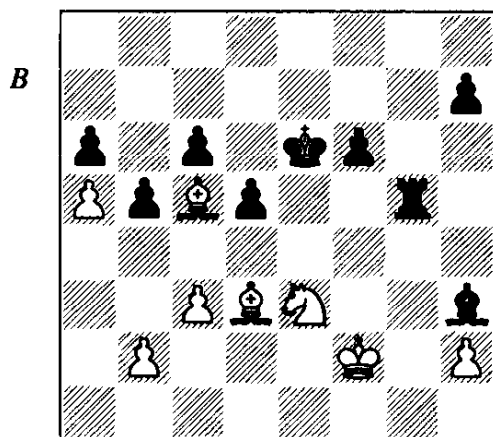
White resigned in view of 57 ♙d2 ♖h2!.

I hope that this section has given the reader some concrete understanding of, or at least the beginning of a feel for, the nuances that determine how a bishop and knight combat a rook and pawn(s). In passing, I would also hope

that this section raised some interesting questions about how studying an opening can also be combined with learning about other aspects of the game.

### Two bishops against a rook and pawns

In general, this is no picnic for the rook. We continue our tour of the Dilworth Attack in search of material.



**L. Shmutter – V. Mikhalevski**  
*Rishon le Zion 1995*

#### 29...f5?

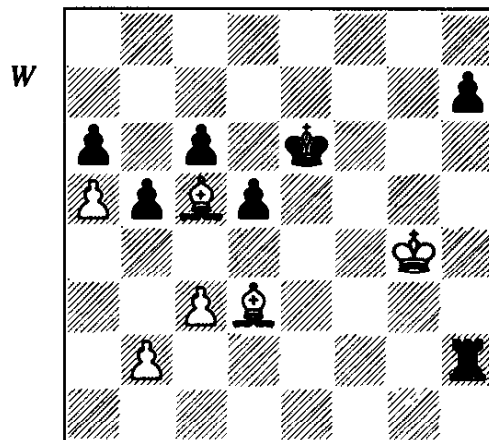
This makes the h3-bishop a very sad piece. After the superior 29...h5 it would be harder for White to improve his position.

#### 30 ♖f3!

White sends his king to f4 to step up the pressure against the f5-pawn and Black's unhappily placed pieces.

30...♙g4+ 31 ♔f4 ♜h5 32 ♘xg4 fxg4 33 ♜xg4 ♜xh2 (D)

Now we get to see the bishop pair in action against a rook. The absence of a passed pawn for White makes this



process a bit long-winded, but the vast amount of terrain the bishops control, and the vulnerable rook's pawns, should ensure White's success. The bishop pair tend to be far more effective than a rook and two pawns. The bishops are at least as efficient in covering both sides of the board, and can usher a passed pawn forward with great ease. When I was a youngster, I remember being given the advice not to consider taking a rook against two bishops for less than three pawns. Naturally, the usual disclaimers about such blanket recommendations apply, but I must confess that I would need a big incentive to side with a rook against the bishop pair.

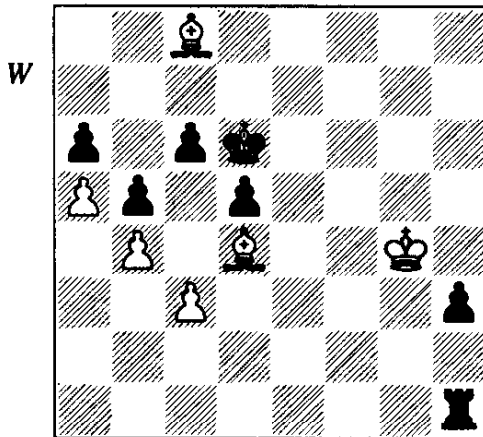
34 ♙f5+ ♔e5 35 ♙d4+ ♔d6 36 b4

Cripples Black's pawn majority for the rest of the game.

36...h5+ 37 ♔g5 ♜e2 38 ♔h4 ♜h2+ 39 ♔g5 h4 40 ♔g4 ♜h1 41 ♙c8 h3 (D)

42 ♔g3!

The most methodical choice. White can win the a-pawn, but faces technical difficulties getting his king in to free the bishop on a6. For example: 42 ♙xa6 h2 43 ♔g3 ♜e1 44 ♔xh2 ♔c7

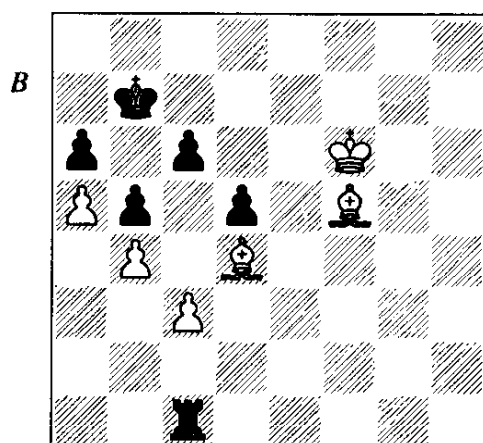


45 ♖g3 ♜e4 (45...♜e8 46 ♖f4 ♜a8 47 ♖e5+ ♖d7 48 ♖b7) 46 ♖f3 ♖b8 47 ♖e3 ♜e8 (to keep the bishop from escaping via c8) 48 ♖c5 ♖c7 49 ♖b6+ ♖b8 50 ♖f4 ♜e4+ 51 ♖f5 ♜e7 52 ♖f6 ♜e4 (52...♜e8 53 ♖d4 and Black will have to cede the e-file to the king or the c8-square to the bishop) 53 ♖d4 ♜e8 and White still has work to do to regain the coordination of his pieces.

42...h2 43 ♖g2 ♜e1 44 ♖xh2 ♜e2+ 45 ♖g3 ♜e8 46 ♖f5

46 ♖xa6 leads to the same kind of problems seen before. White prefers to aim for the invasion of his king, a sensible decision.

46...♜e1 47 ♖f4 ♜e2 48 ♖c5+ ♖c7 49 ♖g5 ♜e1 50 ♖f6 ♜c1 51 ♖b6+ ♖b7 52 ♖d4 (D)



### 52...c5?

A bit of desperation which speeds up the winning process by giving White a passed pawn. White would eventually invade with his king and drive the black king away from the a- or c-pawn. Black probably entertained some hope of taking the a5-pawn, but now he is fighting a hopeless battle.

53 bxc5 ♜e1 54 ♖d7 ♖c7 55 c6 ♖d6 56 ♖c5+ ♖c7 57 ♖f5 ♜e2 58 ♖f4 ♜e4+ 59 ♖f3 ♜c4 60 ♖d4 ♖d6 61 ♖e3 ♖e7 62 ♖d3 ♖d6 63 ♖e3 ♖e7 64 ♖d2 ♖d6 65 ♖e1 ♖e7 66 ♖g3 b4 67 cxb4 ♜xb4 68 ♖f5 ♜b3+ 69 ♖d4 ♜b4+ 70 ♖e5 ♖d8 71 ♖d6 ♜c4 72 ♖d7 1-0

### Tarrasch's proposition

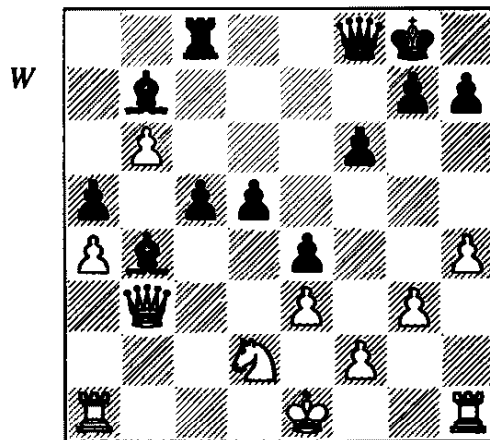
In his notes to Breyer-Tarrasch, Gothenburg 1920, Tarrasch wrote: "In point of material, a Rook and two Bishops are in the end-game frequently stronger than two Rooks and a Knight..." (in *The Game of Chess*). I mention this so that the reader will be prepared to take it into consideration. I would be more inclined to say that two bishops and a rook can sometimes be (at least) as formidable as two rooks and a knight. 'Frequently stronger' strikes me as too bold a statement.

Chess is, as our computer opponents demonstrate with more and more authority, primarily a predictable game in material terms. When the rules of balance can be broken there are always other positional factors that are responsible. In Breyer-Tarrasch, White was butchered long before an

ending, and Tarrasch had pawns and an attack as compensation:

**G. Breyer – S. Tarrasch**  
*Gothenburg 1920*

1 d4 d5 2 e3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 e6 4 ♘bd2  
 ♙d6 5 c4 b6 6 ♚c2 ♙b7 7 c5 bxc5 8  
 dxc5 ♙e7 9 b4 0-0 10 ♙b2 a5 11 b5  
 c6 12 a4 ♘bd7 13 ♙d4 ♞e8 14 ♞c1  
 ♙f8 15 ♚b2 ♘g4 16 h3 ♘h6 17 ♘b3  
 f6 18 ♚a3 e5 19 ♙c3 ♚c7 20 ♙b2  
 ♞ec8 21 ♚a2 ♚d8 22 b6 ♙e7 23  
 ♚b1 ♚f8 24 ♚c2 ♘f7 25 h4 ♘d8 26  
 g3 ♘e6 27 ♙h3 ♘exc5 28 ♘xc5  
 ♘xc5 29 ♙a3 ♘d3+ 30 ♚xd3 ♙xa3  
 31 ♙xc8 ♞xc8 32 ♞a1 ♙b4+ 33 ♘d2  
 e4 34 ♚b3 c5 (D) 35 ♘d1 c4 36 ♚a2  
 ♚d6 37 ♘e2 ♙a6 38 b7 ♞b8 39 ♘d1  
 ♞xb7 40 f3 ♘h8 41 fxe4 dxe4 42 ♘c1  
 ♚xg3 43 ♘f1 ♚e1+ 44 ♘c2 ♚c3+ 45  
 ♘d1 ♚d3+ 46 ♘c1 ♞d7 0-1



Material advantage means more than simply superior force. It also confers superior flexibility, primarily the option to return the surplus in order to gain permanent strategic advantages. Even though much of this chapter deals with ways in which abstract factors can balance or even outweigh material, never lose sight of the fact that goods in hand are a lasting, concrete and often decisive factor.

## Chapter Summary

Reliable forms of compensation for material are:

**Greater piece activity.**

**Damaged enemy pawn structure.**

**The insecure position of the enemy king.**

**Greater board control, more space.**

**Secure control of the centre.**

**Unassailable outposts, domination of a colour complex.**

A lead in development offers dangerous but temporary compensation.

The value of the pieces can change radically as the position simplifies and becomes more open.

“It is better to be a pawn ahead, than a pawn behind.” – Miguel Najdorf, again claiming he was quoting his grandmother.



## 6 Wisdom and Advice

This chapter is a collection of observations from various sources that hopefully impart sage advice or provoke thought<sup>1</sup>.

### Wish I'd heard that earlier

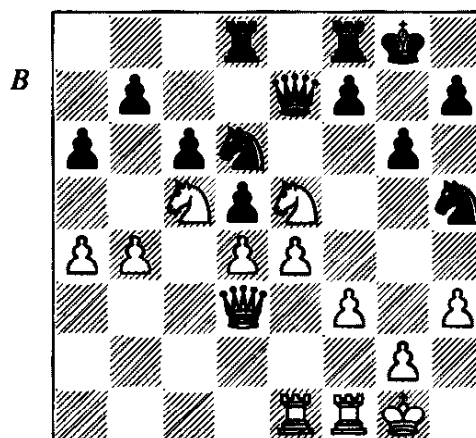
*"Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal."* – Hannah More, British writer and novelist (1745-1833)

### The false initiative

Often there is an irresistible temptation to go along a path where one is allowed to make a succession of threats. What is hard to determine is when this is a false or temporary initiative, that can peter out, expend itself, leaving the player over-extended or over-committed. This is often another type of seduction involving obvious rather than logical moves.

First I will inflict another one of my games on the reader. It is a clear example of the above. My opponent's reaction afterwards made it clear that my resource was as good as invisible to him – he had been completely swept

away by the apparent force of his own threats.



J. Tisdall – S. Sulskis  
Gausdal 1995

23...♕g5!?

Black foregoes an obvious continuation for an aggressive one. After 23...♖g3, 24 exd5! (the unimaginative 24 ♜f2 f6 25 ♖g4 f5 leads to a sizeable black advantage) 24...♖xf1 25 ♕xf1 cxd5 (25...♜c7 26 dxc6 gives White obvious compensation) 26 ♖c6! ♜f6 (or 26...♜xe1+ 27 ♕xe1 bxc6 28 ♜xa6) 27 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 28 ♜e5 planning 28...♖c4 29 ♖xb7! keeps White on top.

24 ♖g4 b6!?

1 Several of the chess proverbs have been culled from Kotov's *Think Like a Grandmaster*, which was also a kind of compendium of Soviet writings. Bronstein, among others, sees *Think Like a Grandmaster* as a kind of scrapbook, so it is important to remember that much of this classic learning stems from a variety of chess writers and thinkers. For this reason I have not referenced these quotes as stemming from *Think Like a Grandmaster*, since they are more the property of the original speaker.

An interesting sacrifice to displace the white knight. Black is obviously thinking like a steamroller.

25 ♖xa6 ♜f4 26 ♜e3 ♜c4 27 ♜c1!  
(D)

Simply keeping the pressure on the f4-knight, and threatening to drive Black back in disarray with 28 h4. This kind of move is very easy to underestimate, and in fact, Sulskis overlooked it completely. White makes a tiny backward step, away from the sensitive g2-square. Even though it is virtually forced, it did not register with my opponent. Such an outwardly submissive move can't be strong, and the forward sweep of the previous moves misled Black into thinking that the sequence must have achieved something. Black has made a couple of big swings, but not made contact and now risks losing his balance.

27...h5?!

27...f5!? 28 exf5 gxf5 29 h4 ♜xh4 30 ♜xf4 fxg4 31 ♜xg4+ ♜xg4 32 fxg4 ♜xf1+ 33 ♜xf1, with a slight advantage to White, was the lesser evil.

28 h4 ♜xh4 29 ♜xf4 hxg4 30 fxg4 dxe4?!

A time-pressure error, and also a reaction to the knowledge that the position has turned. The only move was the ugly, but interesting, 30...g5!. Now the obvious moves are not so appealing for White:

a) 31 ♜f6? ♜d6! (not 31...♜d2? 32 ♜e3 ♜xf1 33 ♜h3 when White stands much better since 33...♜d6? fails to 34 ♜xd6 ♜e1 35 ♜h8+ ♜xh8 36 ♜xf8+ ♜h7 37 ♜xf7+ winning) and Black seizes control.

b) 31 g3! is simplest and best, for example 31...gxf4 32 gxh4 dxe4 33 ♜xf4 ♜d2 and now 34 ♜c1! keeps White on top.

31 ♜xe4 ♜d6 32 ♜e3 ♜h8 33 ♜e7 ♜g7 34 ♜c7 g5 35 ♜f2! ♜g6 36 d5! ♜e4 37 ♜f5 cxd5 38 ♜xd5 ♜xf5

38...♜g3 39 ♜xg6+ fxg6 40 ♜f6+ wins.

39 ♜xf5 ♜d6 40 ♜xg5+ ♜h7 41 ♜xb6 1-0

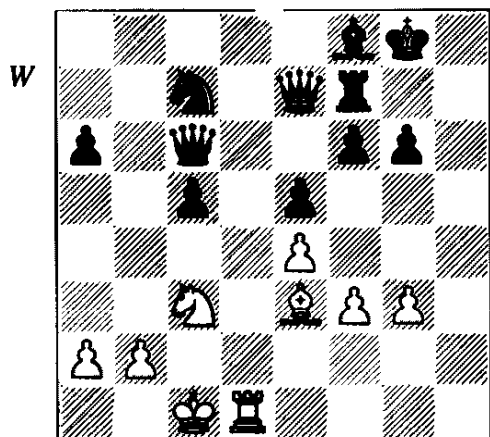
How can one tell when an initiative is false? Are there any identifying signs? Tough questions, and I doubt there are easy answers. The simple advice is not to halt the analytical process too soon, but this does not provide guidelines. We will always have to stop and assess what we examine, but there is also an ever-present danger that this will not be at the ideal point in time. One must be vigilant, and slightly sceptical. Remember that *threats in themselves are not an accomplishment*; they must achieve something concrete.

### Creeping moves and 'Changing the tactics'

Kotov dubs small, at first sight insignificant, moves, which suddenly alter the assessment of a position as *creeping moves*. The illustration he uses in *Think Like a Grandmaster* is worth reproducing here, since it is indeed a vivid and memorable example.

The next fragment made a strong impression on Kotov. Despite White's active position and Black's numerous

weaknesses, it is not easy to find a knock-out blow. Spassky's next move tips the scales, by making a slight alteration that negates Black's current defensive resource.



**B. Spassky – V. Korchnoi**  
*Kiev Ct (7) 1968*

**1 ♖b6!**

1 ♘d5 ♜e6 repels the invaders.

**1...♙g7 2 ♘d5 ♜e6**

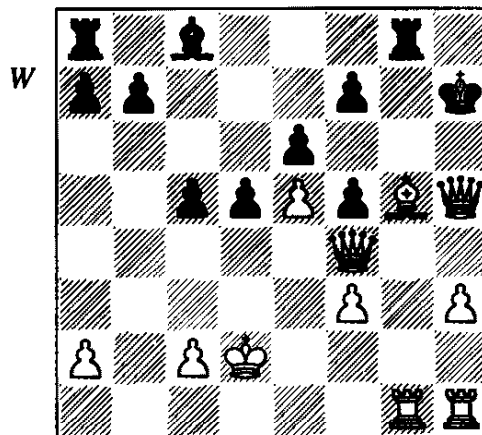
Black surrenders a pawn for temporary activity rather than allow White to exchange his best defender. The finish of the game is attractive:

**3 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 4 ♜xc5 ♘b5 5 ♜e3 ♜c6+ 6 ♙b1 ♘d4 7 ♙c1 ♜b5 8 ♘c7 ♜e2 9 ♘e6+ ♙h7 10 ♜h6+! 1-0**

Here is an example (see next diagram) of another tiny move that suddenly imbues a position with a boost of energy:

**1 ♙h2! ♙d7?!**

Black only addresses one aspect of White's last move, the possibility of doubling rooks and invading on the g-file. This lapse is not so surprising



**Podzielný – Pospech**  
*corr.*

in such a tricky and perilous position. There were two ways to try to foil White's real intentions:

a) **1...♙g7 2 ♙g4! ♙g8 3 ♙f6 fxc4 4 hxc4 ♜xh2+ (4...♜g6 5 ♙h6) 5 ♜xh2 ♙h7 6 ♜f4** and White's attack should prove decisive. One threat is the sequence **7 ♜g5+, 8 ♙e7+ and 9 ♙d6**, when Black's king is helpless.

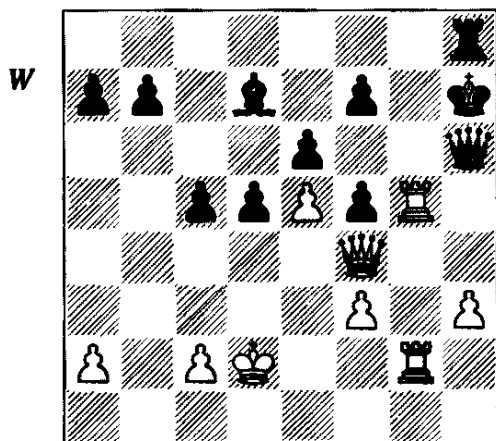
b) **1...♙g6!** prevents White from executing his primary idea of **2 ♙g4**, thanks to the fine parry **2...♙g8! 3 ♙f6 fxc4 4 hxc4 ♙xf6! 5 exf6 e5!**, and Black wins. However, **2 ♙hg2** is better: **2...♙g8** (after **2...♙d7?**, **3 ♙g4!** is suddenly possible again, now due to the weakness of f7; if **3...fxg4** then **4 ♜xf7+**) and White can keep his attack going with the sudden switch of direction **3 ♜a4!?**, and this time Black suffers danger since he has not managed to develop the c8-bishop. Each of Black's defensive ideas suffers from a different drawback. After **3...♜xf3 4 ♜e8+ ♙h7 5 ♜xf7+ ♙g7 6 ♜e8** White has dangerous attacking chances.

**2 ♙g4!**

White strives to use the h-file at any cost. The point of White's first move becomes clear: the h-rook has crept on to a protected square, creating a greater sense of cooperation among White's pieces.

2...♖xg5 3 ♖xg5 ♔h6 4 ♖hg2 ♖h8?! (D)

4...♖g8 was better.



5 ♖2g4!

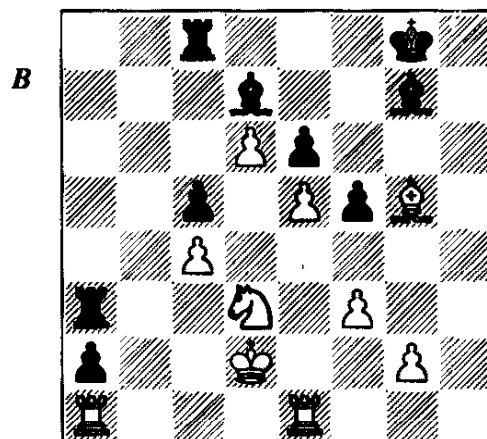
A second rook 'sacrifice' on g4, with a slightly different tactical idea – the exploitation of the newly opened h-file is the recurring motif.

5...f6 6 ♖h4 f×g4 7 ♔xg5 ♔xh4 8 ♔xh4+ 1-0

An interesting point is how to categorize this example. Is it line-opening, combination 'construction', a twist of Lange's line-opening mate<sup>1</sup>? My impression is that the Lange pattern is a trigger, but that it is a fine example of a creeping move.

A similar concept is 'changing the tactics', where some minor detail that

allows a position to be kept afloat tactically, can be adjusted to alter the evaluation of the position. A memorable example nearly occurred in the fifth game of the 1986 Kasparov-Karpov world title match:



A. Karpov – G. Kasparov  
London/Leningrad Wch (5) 1986

In this position Kasparov played the relatively submissive...

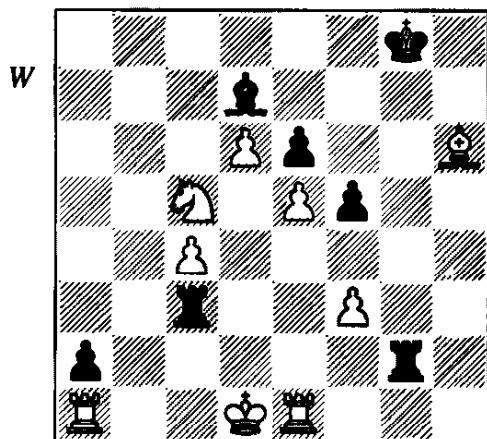
27...♔f7

...when there had been considerable excitement generated in the press room concerning the active continuation 27...♖b8!?

We had produced a beautiful variation that seemed to rescue Black's position, just before his structural problems become fatal. The idea behind the move is the variation 28 ♔f4 ♖bb3 29 ♔xc5 ♖b2+ 30 ♔c1 ♖xg2 31 ♔d2 ♔h6! 32 ♔xh6 ♖c3+ 33 ♔d1 (D).

In this position Black crowns his counterattack with 33...♖d3+!! 34

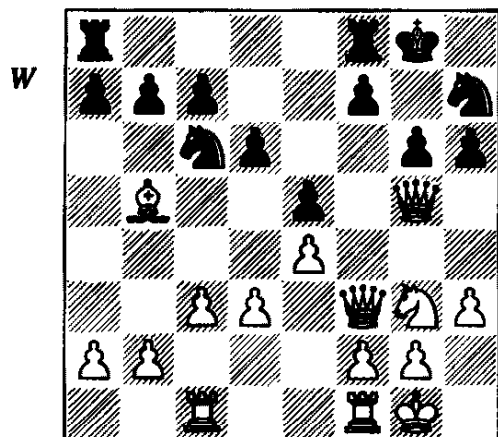
1 See Appendix 1. Lange's mate is a bit different, but the 'feel' of it, the sacrifice aimed at prying open a file, is clearly related.



Like all of the family of unobtrusive chess techniques<sup>1</sup>, this kind of move or manoeuvre should be carefully noted, because it is as effective as it is easy to overlook.

Here (see diagram overleaf) is a deservedly classic example of a common hallucination:

1 Zugzwang, brinkmate and sometimes the *zwischenzug*, are other common types of quiet moves.



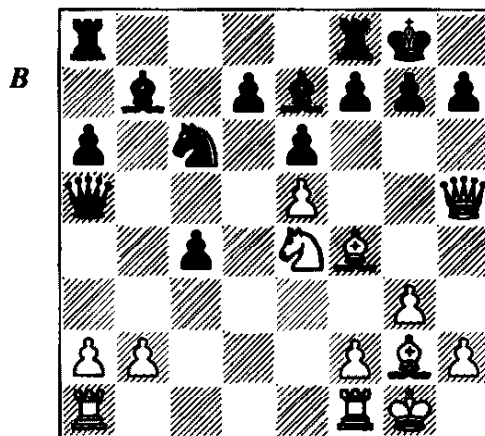
**A. Ilyin-Zhenevsky – V. Nenarokov**  
*Moscow 1923*

1 ♔e3 ♘e7 2 f4?? exf4 3 ♔xf4  
♔xb5

“This was something I hadn’t dreamed of. The idea that the queen couldn’t attack the bishop because of the barrier of the black pawn [on e5 – JT] had become so firmly established in my consciousness that even when the queen took the bishop I thought it had played an illegal move by jumping over the pawn.” – Ilyin-Zhenevsky<sup>1</sup>.

The barrier example of Ilyin-Zhenevsky’s made such a strong impression on me that I have had it strongly implanted in mind (so it *can* help simply to know of the existence of such hazards). Ilyin-Zhenevsky seems to be the patron saint of odd blunders, and his games and his explanations for the processes behind them feature extensively in both *Think Like a Grandmaster* and *Chess Psychology*.

I remember a brilliant modern example of this barrier phenomenon, which I happened to be watching.



**B. Gulko – S. Agdestein**  
*Reykjavik Summit match 1990*

Black has just played 15...♔d8-a5!, hampering White’s kingside attack by mounting additional pressure on the e5-pawn and monitoring the fifth rank. Besides attractive attacking chances, White also appears to have fine positional compensation for the sacrificed pawn, with the d7-pawn a sensitive target. Here Gulko played the extremely natural...

**16 ♖ad1**

...and was shocked by the reply...

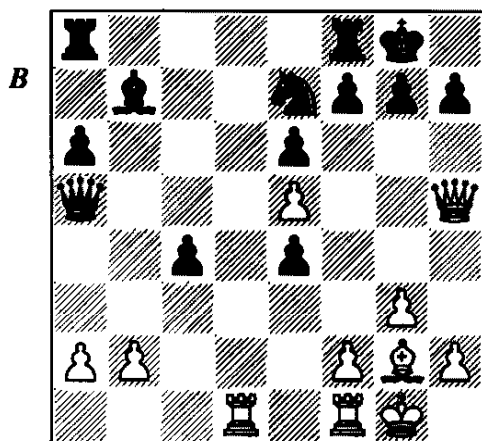
**16...d5!**

...after which his compensation for the pawn evaporated. White cannot take the cheeky d-pawn, as the e-pawn is pinned to the queen on h5! This is a hyper-version of Ilyin-Zhenevsky’s ‘hallucination’. Here two pawns disappear along the fifth rank, making it

<sup>1</sup> As cited in *Think Like a Grandmaster* and translated by Bernard Cafferty. I have seen other, less coherent renderings in other works.

even harder to visualize the real state of affairs. White decided to launch a full assault, but could not resist Black's dogged materialism.

17 ♖g5 dxe4 18 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 (D)

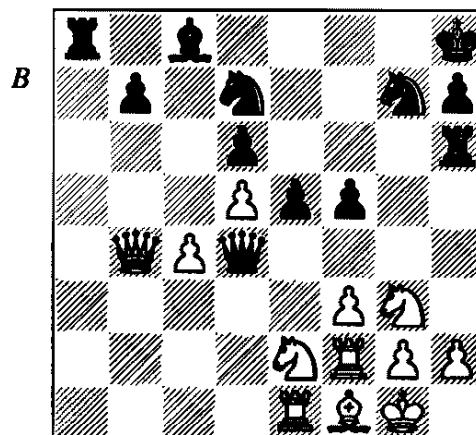


19 ♖d7 ♗b4 20 a3 ♗xb2 21 ♖xe7 ♖d5 22 f4 c3 23 f5 c2 24 fxe6 c1♗ 25 ♖xf7 ♗d4+ 26 ♔h1 ♗xf1+ 0-1

*Chess Psychology* covers the topic of typically 'blunderous' thought-processes very well, and divides the problem into three categories: the retained image (Ilyin-Zhenevsky's barrier blunder falls into this category), the inert image (more abstract – this is the transfer of an assessment forward, for example, assuming a game is won before the game is over), and the advance image.

The advance image also covers a kind of mental attitude, a terribly common and dangerous one. Krogus's example is too good not to borrow (D):

Riumin relates that here he suddenly spotted a combination, ...♘c5, followed by ...♗xf2+ and ...♘d3+, winning. Without a second thought he played:



J. Capablanca – N. Riumin  
Moscow 1936

1...♘c5?? 1-0

Black resigned before Capablanca could make his reply.

Isn't it strange how quickly we notice the truth *after* making our move? This shows how important it often is to regain some objective distance before moving (see next section).

Krogus's diagnosis sums up precisely: "Enthusiasm for the plan is so high, that calculating is often done solely for 'one's self', as though the opponent did not exist."

My only expansion on this would be to say that a horrific blunder does not have to be the result of this kind of thinking. The inability to find the best replies or the intentions of the opponent can lead to defeat in a variety of more subtle ways. Let this frightening example be a warning against all kinds of similar thinking.

## Crass Blunders

Horrible blunders tend to occur due to a sudden loss of concentration, or

because of a lack of distance (not seeing the wood for the trees, which could be a symptom of the opposite extreme, too much concentration). Here are a few classic remedies:

Look at the board through the eyes of a 'patzer'<sup>1</sup>.

Write down your move before you play it.

I cannot remember the first time I read the advice I later saw dubbed 'Blumenfeld's Rule'. Whether that name is part of the great Soviet urge to give things proprietary labels, or whether or not the Russian chess psychologist is in fact the original author, I do not know. The counsel is simple. Before making your intended move, look at the position one last time as if you were a beginner. Ask some silly questions. The most important being: am I leaving anything hanging? Another good one is: what did my opponent's last move threaten?

This may seem humbling, but it is a nice habit to get into. When I was young, I almost never committed crimes of blindness, and I am quite sure it was because I read this advice at an impressionable age. Periodic 'hallucinations', a nice euphemism, only began to plague me after I had reasonable international experience.

There is no doubt that examples of chess blindness, where one or both

players make oversights that would literally embarrass novices, are largely due to examining fine detail and forgetting the obvious. So one could argue that the practice is even more useful when refreshed at a later and more experienced stage of one's chess development. The important thing to note is that it is indeed possible to concentrate too much, and usually a little distance is both refreshing and healthy.

When suffering from bouts of mental sloppiness, I have experimented with writing my move down before actually playing it. This is another suggestion from the grand old Soviet school. I believe that the specific advice was to write down the move in long notation – recording the square moved from as well as the square moved to, e.g. ♔f1-b5. The effect of this is also to engage a healthy distancing mechanism, that allows one to emerge from deep reflection and confront the mundane realities of the move to come. I find this habit can be helpful, but has many potential drawbacks.

For one thing, if you spot errors, your scoresheet becomes a mess. This is not necessarily a trivial matter, as I will relate in a moment. The most dangerous aspect of this habit lies in the possibility of writing down the first

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1 It suddenly occurred to me that the word *patzer* might be unfamiliar to a younger audience. I hope not. But to be safe, it means a bumbler, a bad player, from the German *verpatzen*, to ruin, spoil. A similar expression that is probably dying out in the synthetic age is *woodpusher*. For spectacularly planless players, we used to use the term *treepusher*, but I digress.



move that comes to mind. Then, your move sits there while you actually go about thinking about whether it is correct. Then you scratch it out, fill in your latest favourite, and do it over again. In this case, the scoresheet becomes a metaphor for the untidy state of one's thoughts. The point of this discipline is to restore clarity. To make a brief check of completed reflection and then act. Often it becomes an opportunity to become more disorganized.

On the subject of messy scoresheets, I had a traumatic experience recently that demonstrated a novel drawback to this technique. I recently left a tournament hall for a quick, relaxing stroll to mark the completion of the first time control. This practice comes from digesting other bits of well-meant wisdom. Namely, that it pays to relax after the heightened stress of the time control, and that one should not rush one's first move after a time control. I returned to my game to find the board surrounded by arbiters and was informed that I had lost on forfeit. My absolute faith in my ability to keep a proper score in the most adverse conditions convinced me that this claim was based on some mistake by my opponent. We compared scores. "What is that?" he asked, pointing to a blotch in a move box. What it was, was the remains of a spurned move, masquerading as something that happened.

I do not write my moves down before making them any more. I still believe that it can be useful, but it should be done with discipline and care.

When I feel a strong need to provide some kind of wake-up mechanism before making a move now, I make a tiny dot, check my move and then make it. No mess, and so far, no nasty side-effects. [*Editor's note:* with the mid-1997 rule changes, a further drawback to writing down one's move before playing it has arisen; since it is now illegal to cover the scoresheet, the opponent gets a preview of the intended move.]

## How to Study Games

Perhaps the most oft-repeated advice is that one should play through games by trying to guess the next move, rather than rattling right through the score. There is a reason this is repeated so often – it is very good advice. Nimzowitsch, I believe, attributed his improvement as a player to his practice of inserting blank sheets between the pages of his chess books in order to record his reactions and analyses as he played over games. This guarantees an active, personal, involvement while studying, and one cannot avoid raising questions that force a search for answers.

There are other methods that can be helpful. Study of the games of one particular player can be particularly revealing. One can choose a role model that shares one's opening repertoire. This is a very efficient way of gaining compressed experience.

Or, select a player that has a style or special skill which one would like to emulate.

I find that when one has done this kind of study for a while, and got some sense of different styles, one can conjure up an apt state of mind when needed. For example, if you feel that a position demands an aggressive solution, one could muse about what a Tal might do. If your pieces are not quite properly co-ordinated, one could invoke Karpov, a master of harmony. This sounds simplistic but it often works, *by slightly expanding the range of moves one automatically examines.*

## Proverbs – Chess and Shogi

### Maxim or Cliché?

Now I would like to take a look at examples of shogi maxims that deserve greater attention in the chess sphere. One question that bothered me during my period of cross-education was that maxims in shogi appeared to carry more weight than those in chess. They were often quoted when top players annotated games, whereas I can almost never recall an example of a top GM making a reference to some kind of rule like ‘knights before bishops’. So, many questions occurred to me. Was chess more lawless? Was it simpler, and so needed fewer fast guidelines? Was it simply a cultural difference of respect towards this kind of thinking?

Jeff Mallett from the (Internet) shogi discussion list provided an intriguing argument, which convinced me that there are in fact far more chess proverbs than we realize:

“Although they’re not given that name, what else can these possibly be? ‘A knight on the rim is dim/grim.’ ‘Passed pawns must be pushed.’ ‘Rooks belong behind passed pawns.’, etc., etc.

“Many of the concepts of chess are commonly stated as mini-phrases ‘bishop pair’, ‘rook on the 7th’, ‘centralized king’. All you need to add is a little ‘Confucius says: “It is good to have...”’ preamble and *voilà*, instant proverb.”

This was an eye-opening thought: that many chess maxims have become consigned to cliché status, or condensed to catchphrases. Examining this could well be a promising field for student or trainer.

One of the most important projects for an improving player is advancing to the stage where one can judge when rule-breaking is justified. A closer study of the reasons certain chess maxims came to be popular needs to be done. We need to explain some of our phrases better, and then examine how, when and why we can break sensible rules.

### Attacks grow from seed pieces

This piece of shogi advice means that some force must accumulate around the enemy king before one can launch a successful attack. I was reminded of this when I heard Kasparov say something to the effect that an attack begins when you get a pawn near the (enemy) king. He should know, and it may explain his affection for the

King's Indian Defence, where this underlies Black's attacking strategy.

Part of the truth behind Kasparov's aphorism lies in the pawn's profitability potential. As cheap labour, it can frighten off more valuable pieces, and is relatively immune from being exchanged for larger pieces. When arriving outside the enemy king position, a pawn can be used as an affordable sacrifice to gain entry. And as it approaches the king even more, it tends also to approach promotion, the ultimate in profitable transactions.

Another reason behind the advice that one should ensure a strong attacking force lies in the strength of the enemy. The king is actually quite a strong defender, and requires only a little assistance to take good care of himself. He must be overpowered.

### **The enemy's vital point is your own<sup>1</sup>**

This shogi pointer can also be adopted profitably. The best way to show that this imparts practical advice rather than stating the obvious, is with examples. There are two excellent instances elsewhere in this book. One is referenced in the comments to L. Hansen-Hartman (move 27) in the positional section of Chapter 4, Pattern Training, the other is the turning point (move 25) of the game Østenstad-Tisdall in the tactical section of the same chapter.

### **Brinkmate**

This term is a neat coinage of John Fairbairn's, writing in *Shogi for Beginners* about the Japanese term *hisshi*. Hisshi (literally 'desperation'), is a basic mating concept in shogi, and hisshi problems are one of the two basic types of endgame exercises. While a typical shogi game ends in a sequence of checks (as a mating attack is the only type of endgame there, or to be more accurate, a mating race), hisshi is another vital type of execution skill; creating a quiet, inescapable mating net.

This could arguably fall into either of the appendices dealing with common tactical or mating motifs. Since it has not often, to my knowledge, been stressed as a separate concept, and since it has a direct link to the shogi influence on this book, I will discuss it here.

This simple but vital concept has been widely ignored in studying (mating) attacks in chess, despite it being a common device there as well. Solving chess combinations (or trying to work out a clear attacking finish in a game) often results in a pattern of thought where we go into number crunching mode, seeking a forced and violent winning sequence. By 'violent', I mean checks and captures.

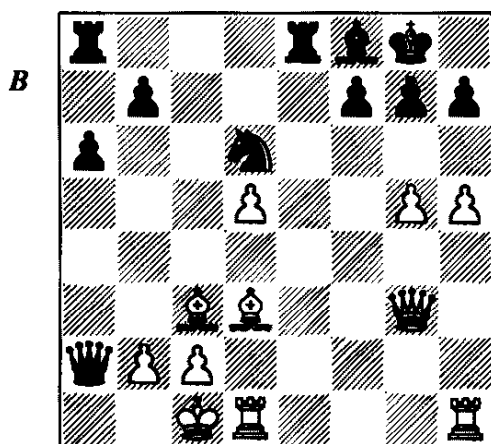
In practice there are often far more efficient methods, and they are quite easy to overlook in the heat of battle,

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1 From the original: "Teki no kyuusho wa /jibun no kyuusho" (to be read 7/7 syllables, the traditional Japanese rhythm for a good proverb. Translation supplied by Takako Noda from the shogi list. Thanks!)

or the even headier intoxication of imminent victory. I think this is in part due to the tendency to think in brute-force terms when attacking, and that 'brinkmating' techniques have not been emphasized enough in chess manuals.

Here is a position which brought the issue of brinkmate to mind. It was classified in the *Encyclopedia of Combinations* as an example of a blocking combination.



**H. Luik – A. Vooremaa**  
USSR 1978

**1...♖e2! 2 ♔xh7+**

2 ♔xe2 ♕e4 again seals off d2, this time with an added threat to the queen. 2 b3 ♕e4 combines an attack on the queen with the threat of ...♔a3+, mating.

**2...♔xh7 3 ♕d3+ ♕e4! 0-1**

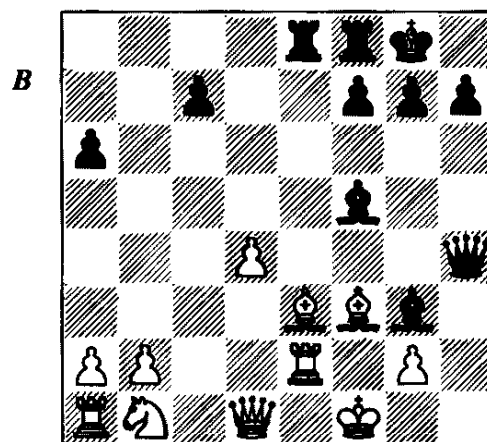
Black's last move reinforces the theme of securing the escape square.

This classification struck me as being so false as to be offensive. What was being blocked? Absolutely nothing, sir. See Appendix 2 for an example of a real blocking sacrifice.

What is happening here is a clear case of *hisshi*. The immediate check on a1 leads nowhere, but by closing the exits, Black turns it into a lethal threat.

Another way of looking at this theme is to see it as cornering instead of chasing the king. Cutting off a king's escape route often proves more lethal than a spirited chase. Another good reason for stressing this attacking tool is that it is a quiet technique, and quiet things are more easily overlooked and forgotten.

Here is a familiar use of brinkmate, hidden behind more violent ideas.



**Zaibert – Zaleski**  
corr. 1959

**1...♖xe3!**

Destruction of the defender.

**2 ♖xe3 ♔d3+!**

Giving White a choice of two deadly themes.

**3 ♖xd3**

The alternative is 3 ♕xd3 ♕h1+ 4 ♔e2 ♕e1#, when the offer on d3 was a blocking sacrifice.

**3...♖e8! 0-1**

Black decides the game with 'brink-mate', stopping the king running.

### **Selected Chess 'Proverbs'**

*"A knight ending is really a pawn ending"* – Mikhail Botvinnik

The meaning of this is not immediately obvious, though it has entered the game as one of the great truths. In passing, I would propose that all such rules of thumb gain more general relevance the later the stage of the game they refer to. So, the opening 'rules' are the ones most often violated.

What Botvinnik means is that the devices of knight endings are very closely related to pawn endings. So, outside passed pawns have extremely high value, and there is a great deal of king triangulation, since knights are not capable of this kind of manoeuvre.

*"With opposite-coloured bishops the attacking side has in effect an extra piece in the shape of his bishop."* – Mikhail Botvinnik

*"When you are conscious not to have violated the rules laid down, you should accept the sacrifice of an important Pawn, as the KP, QP or one of the BPs."<sup>1</sup>* – Emanuel Lasker, *Common Sense in Chess*

I think that this is a highly underrated piece of advice; at least I have

not heard it as often as some other opening pointers. Lasker was a strict and scientific chess teacher, and it is worth elaborating upon the preamble to his maxim. The rules you are not to have violated are the general pointers regarding central development, such as not having moved a piece more than once in the opening, having developed your knights before bishops, etc.

He also did not advocate simple greed. Part of the wisdom behind this rule was that one should usually aim to return the material for positional profit, rather than take greater risks by becoming obsessed with keeping the pawn. This attitude was the first great step forward in the development of defensive techniques.

Lasker's reasoning was that the central pawns were of such great importance that the opponent's lack of them would be a serious long-term disadvantage. Having already said that opening rules are the most likely to be successfully violated, I would nevertheless rate this as one of the most reliable opening guidelines. Even at later stages of the game, the offer of a centre pawn should only be undertaken with the greatest care.

### **Psychological Advice**

*"To lose one's objective attitude to a position, nearly always means ruining your game."* – David Bronstein.

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1 That's e-, d-, or c- and f-pawns. Nimzowitsch says virtually the same thing in *My System*, which gives it added weight as a reliable rule.

*“If you have made a mistake or committed an inaccuracy there is no need to become annoyed and to think that everything is lost. You have to reorientate yourself quickly and find a new plan in the new situation.”* – David Bronstein.

This counsel reminds me of another sage piece of advice, which I first remember reading in the notes to a game by Pal Benko. He wrote that one of the stupidest (he was more polite, I am trying to make a point, especially since I felt that this applied particularly to me) and most common errors was the wasting of time and energy looking at variations that would have been possible if one had not just made that last mistake on the board. The gist of his advice is the same as Bronstein’s, but the additional incitement to *never look back* should also be stressed.

### Practical Advice

*“Play not too fast! Examine each move, however natural it may appear. ... If you have to choose from several, equally worthy-looking moves, do not delve into endless comparisons. Do not forget that in most situations there are several good ways, but you have to select only one of them, else it will be too late! Do not always search for objectively the best move – frequently there really is none such: in most cases it is a matter of taste – but simply look for a good move!”* – Rudolf Spielmann

These not terribly well known words offer a wealth of sound counsel. Although the primary aim of Spielmann’s advice aims at helping players avoid superficiality without coming into time-trouble, the tricky issue of the best move raises its head.

There is a common perception that there exists in every position an absolute best move. Discussing this can lead into the tricky realm of philosophy. I have come to believe, over time, and from discussions with mighty players, that the quest for a best move is often fruitless. Certainly, in the early stages, taste plays a major factor in selecting the course the game takes. Of course, finding a course that suits you, or does not suit the opponent, still makes these choices important.

What do exist are *critical moments*, where the course or result of the game can be radically influenced. Developing a feel for these moments, and handling them properly is a difficult and still unexplored field.

I remember having a conversation with Lubosh Kavalek on this topic, during the world championship match in Merano in 1981, and being in general agreement. We also chatted a bit about a common interest in Anatoly Karpov’s remarkable ability to postpone or avoid critical position types. One of Karpov’s amazing talents is his knack for reaching and maintaining positions where his uncanny manoeuvring ability dictates the pace of the game. Sergei Dolmatov has promised work on this very topic, which he calls ‘elastic manoeuvring’,

and mentions in one of Dvoretsky's books that he has been studying this subject in detail.

Nevertheless, there remain very strong players who firmly believe that best moves are present most of the time. It seems to me that this faith is partly a matter of upbringing and outlook. It may well be that at a certain, extremely high, level the percentage of occasions where there is a clearly superior move rises noticeably, but that is beyond the scope of this author.

## Time Pressure

*"Perfectionism is spelled 'Paralysis'"*  
– Sir Winston Churchill

Time pressure addicts, and I have been one, don't be somewhat flattered. Perfectionism may occasionally be to blame, but more ignoble reasons are more common. In fact, don't be flattered at all. Perfectionism will not get you far as a player, unless you are one of those rare creatures that can produce something close to the goods. Perfectionism is something to keep you motivated, but should be left behind at the workshop when it is time to play. Too much attention to detail will certainly bring you time-pressure, and probably turn you into a teacher or an accountant<sup>1</sup>. There are worse fates, but you should be warned.

One of the best aspects of Krogius's *Chess Psychology* is his discussion of this topic. I will just touch upon a few points that correspond to my own experience. For stimulating reading on topics like blunders and time-troubled thought-processes, by all means try to get a copy of Krogius's book.

The cause of chronic time-pressure can be revealed by an honest examination of one's own games. Krogius outlines basic reasons, and these are more or less self-explanatory. Besides the most common reason, a congenital weakness in making decisions, he lists: inadequate theoretical preparation, inadequate practical preparation (being 'rusty'), objective complexity of the position, and conscious entry into time pressure (a desperate but often rewarding psychological gambit). He also goes on to detail different types of 'doubts', related to both to the situation on the board and in the player's psychological state.

The most practical aspects of dealing with time-pressure involve considering how players react when in time trouble. Here it is possible to note recurring patterns or reactions, and to give some kind of general advice.

Without a doubt, the most common tendency in time-pressure is to revert to being a simplistic tactical animal. The time-scrambler goes into a panicky mode of thinking, and becomes largely dependent on bursts of forced

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1 No offence meant – some of my best friends are accountants. And I seem to have become a teacher. Accountancy tends to pay better, but some of us are not on good terms with numbers.

tactical sequences. The most common types of errors are linked to this limited, primitive way of thinking. Almost any move that deviates from such sequences can come as a fatal surprise. In-between moves that disrupt a sequence of captures, for example, are most easily overlooked.

The most difficult move for a scrambler to meet is a quiet one, preferably one that strengthens a position without introducing a direct or obvious threat. Rather than being able to react instinctively, different thought-mechanisms are engaged, and the common sight of a trembling hand wavering in the air above the board is the usual result.

This is part of the explanation behind why it is often a grave mistake to try to rush a time-troubled opponent. This kind of tempo, and the kind of thinking associated with it, only raises the likelihood of an unforced error, and levels the playing field.

There are a wealth of other reasons arguing against blitzing an opponent in time-trouble. It may be what he wants – he may have entered time-pressure intentionally, hoping to induce this kind of behaviour. You also squander a valuable resource, the store of time for deeper reflection. You also lose your peace of mind, and are more likely to enter into an unnecessarily agitated state.

While it may be frustrating to know that your opponent is busily using your time to prepare his responses, you have a good idea of what direction his thoughts are taking. By avoiding

forcing lines, or unnecessary simplifications, you can maximize the adversary's discomfort. One can also take greater risks against a time-pressured opponent – say by choosing a complicated continuation instead of a restrained one – but always bear in mind that this may play into enemy hands if you indulge in outright gambling.

If you find yourself in time-pressure, try to bear in mind the pitfalls outlined above. Try to think normally, just faster. Do not lose sight of sedate stratagems, like prophylactic moves, keeping your pieces coordinated, not creating weaknesses. Try to avoid rash moves that simply pose crude threats.

### **Killer Instinct**

*"When your opponent is drowning, throw the son of a bitch an anvil." – James Carville, U.S. Democratic political advisor and author, and Mary Matalin, U.S. Republican political adviser, author. All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President, Random House (1994).*

The competitive instinct is very important. Chess has been likened to mental boxing, and I have always found that a very apt comparison. Some people *play* chess. Others are fighters. And then there are the few that are real *killers*. If you can happily adopt the quotation above as a life motto, you may be one of the few. That doesn't mean I approve, though. (Of course killers don't care, either.)



## Prophylaxis

*“Prophylaxis, n. The prevention of disease or control of its possible spread.” – Collins English Dictionary, Third Edition, 1991*

*“The question – ‘What is the opponent thinking?’, ‘What goal is he striving for?’ as a rule accompanies the choice of every regular move.” – Nikolai Krogius*

Krogius is right and wrong. I would agree completely if he said that the question *should* accompany every move. All too often, it doesn't. We prefer to think about what we want to do, and often forget to give our opponent his proper status in our reckonings.

Prophylaxis as a chess term was introduced by the colourful chess teacher and philosopher Aron Nimzowitsch<sup>1</sup>. It seems to me that the term has come to mean something quite different than Nimzo intended.

For him, prophylaxis was one of the fundamental positional concepts, and was mainly expressed through his idea of over-protection, where the focus of the pieces is directed toward key points, usually advanced pawns or important squares. By doing this, Nimzowitsch believed that the possibilities of the opponent would be limited as a natural consequence.

Over-protection as an end in itself never really caught on. When we talk about prophylactic measures today, there is a much more specific and dynamic sense attached to the term, it seems to me. Although the result may be perceived as defensive technique, it does not always have this effect in practice. By limiting the opponent's ideas, we exercise control. When we face prophylactic measures, it often feels as if we are being oppressed, rather than that our opponent is playing fearfully or conservatively.

Indeed, prophylactic thinking often produces best results when employed from a position of strength, when snuffing out any hint of counterplay that could interfere with our realization of an advantage<sup>2</sup>.

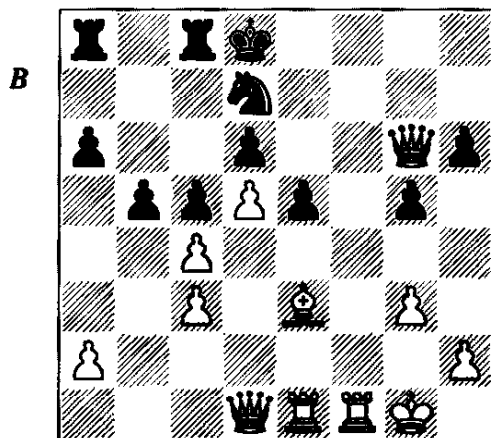
Previously, I had a tendency to react to a plan of my opponent's by trying to create some kind of distraction or counteractivity. This is a feeble substitute for the methodical forestalling of an opponent's possibilities. When this sloppy tendency began to occur with alarming frequency, I undertook an active, conscious, effort to find useful moves or plans that foiled the enemy intentions. The result was an immediate increase in the amount of control over the course of a game, and a higher degree of accuracy.

You probably feel an example is in order. Here are two, first a relatively simple one to show that I really do try

1 Or Nimzovich. Or many other possible spellings over the years.

2 For a good example of this, see the finish to the game Portisch-Yusupov in the Positional section of Chapter 4, Pattern Training.

to think this way now. Then, a more subtle illustration, from a rather more sophisticated player.



**T. Dao – J. Tisdall**  
*Erevan OL 1996*

In this position Black has a lot going his way. A pawn snatch has given him the groundwork of a comfortable advantage, but his position is a bit loose and his king somewhat insecure. White last move, 31 ♖d1 prepares to launch an attack by playing ♗g4 and h4, as well as creating the possibility of using the open f-file to develop an initiative. From g4, the queen may also hop into e6, if the creation of a passed pawn on this square comes in handy.

In earlier days, I would have devoted a great deal of attention to the move 31...♟b6!? hoping to smash away at c4 and d5 before White could mobilize his threats. There are a number of reasons this should make Black uneasy – not only does the move not address White's ideas, it removes the black king's best defender. While the distractionary motives behind this

move might pay off, Black would take grave risks this way.

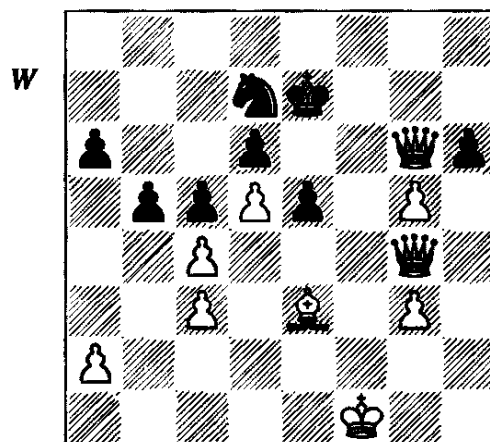
One possible continuation is 32 ♗f3!? ♟xc4?! 33 ♗f7 ♗xf7 34 ♖xf7 ♟b6 35 h4 ♟xd5 36 hxg5 and the ferocious activity of White's pieces guarantees him plenty of dangerous threats.

It did not take long for me to find a mature, prophylactic way to continue the game. There followed...

**31...♟e7!**

...when Black prevents counterplay by guarding e6 and preparing exchanges on the f-line. Although this allows White to regain his pawn after...

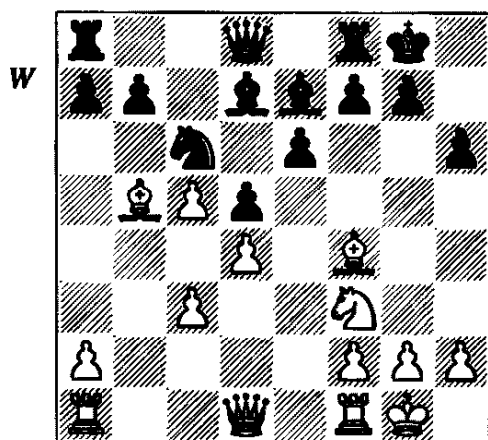
**32 ♗g4 ♖f8 33 h4 ♖xf1+ 34 ♖xf1 ♖f8 35 hxg5 ♖xf1+ 36 ♟xf1 (D)**



**36...h5!**

...Black's positional superiority is obvious. White's e3-bishop is hemmed in, his pawns are still weak and he faces an unpleasant and uninterrupted defensive chore. Sadly, this did not prove enough for me actually to win the game, thanks to very resourceful and determined play by my opponent, but that is another story.

# Prophylaxis of the first order



**G. Kasparov – V. Anand**  
*Amsterdam 1996*

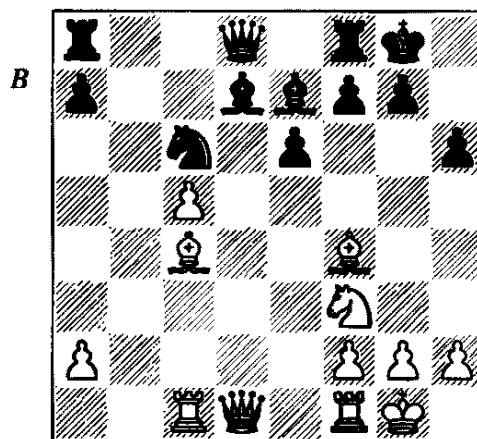
Kasparov, in his notes to this game in *New in Chess* No. 3/96, goes into instructive detail about his thought-process in this position. Boiling his ruminations down: there are many attractive features in the white position – active pieces, extra space, and some long-range chances of mounting a kingside attack, with ideas like using the b1-h7 diagonal for bishop and queen, and perhaps a strong knight outpost on e5 at a later date.

However, there is also a very pressing problem – Black threatens to play ...b6, freeing himself and creating unpleasant lines of attack against White's weakened queenside pawns on the a- and c-files. Kasparov finds an impressive solution, which shows the potential power of prophylactic thinking.

It is also a nice example because it is a fine specimen of that rare Nimzowitschian concept, the 'mysterious rook move', where a paradoxical post nevertheless influences vital files.

## 13 ♖c1!!

"The two exclamation marks are because of the 'absolute stupidity' of the rook on c1. It stands behind two pawns and there is absolutely nothing to be done on the c-file. There is only one important goal, which compensates for all the stupidities: it prevents 13...b6. Now after 13...b6 White plays 14 c4 and suddenly we see the strength of the rook on the c-file, e.g. 14...bxc5 (14...dxc4 15 d5 exd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖c8 17 ♖fd1 ♗e6 18 ♖e4 ♖e8 19 ♗e5) 15 dxc5 dxc4 16 ♗xc4 (D) and the position is open. Both the rook and the f4-bishop are brilliantly placed, and the weak c-pawn is now a passed pawn!"



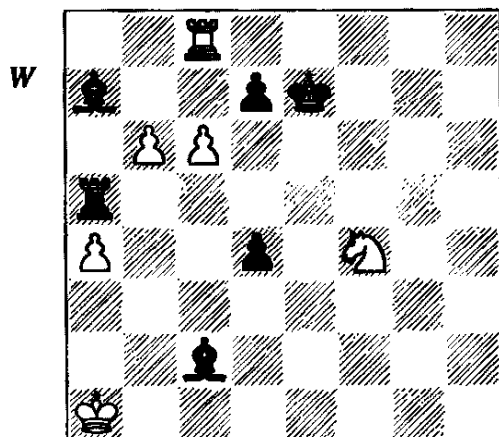
Here Kasparov gives many variations, but the key one is that 16...♗xc5 fails to 17 ♗b5 ♖e7 (17...♖b6 18 ♖xd7 ♖xb5 19 a4 ♖b6 20 ♗c7 wins for White) 18 ♖c2 ♗d4 19 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 20 ♖xc5 ♗xb5 (20...♗xb5 21 ♗xd4 ♗xf1 22 ♗xf1 clearly favours White) 21 a4 ♗a3 22 ♖c3 and the black knight is trapped – which is a pretty good indication of the depth of thinking and calculation that make up a 2800+ player. If one were playing

through this game without Kasparov's comments one would most likely either breeze right past this move, or stare at it in puzzlement. (And then breeze past it.) Kasparov's notes to this game also reveal a perfect synthesis of abstract chat and profound analysis. (I take every opportunity to promote the thesis of Chapter 1, *The Fabled Tree of Analysis*. Shameless.)

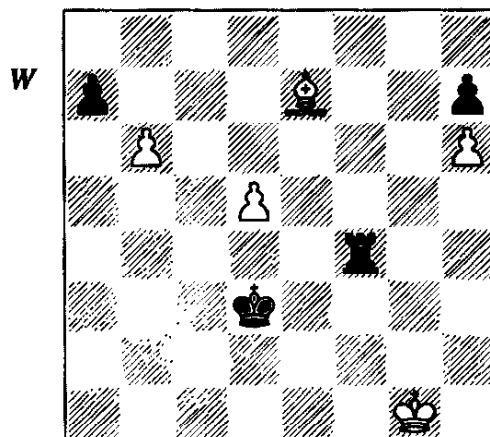
The game continued 13...♖e8 and Kasparov won. Only he can do the game justice, so I refer the interested reader to the notes of the man himself for the rest of the game.

### What am I exercising? Why am I doing this?

Here is an opportunity to take a short break from all this philosophizing and get back to the chessboard for a bit. Try to crack these two studies. Don't give up if the solution eludes you; set them aside and try again later. The satisfaction of puzzling them out will be worth it.



**M. Hlinka & E. Klimanić, 1985**  
White to play and win



**A. Troitsky, 1925**  
White to play and win

One of the most underrated exercises is the solving of certain types of endgame studies. I don't have in mind very technical positions (though they are of course instructive). I often use studies that are slightly more spectacular, preferably without being unrealistic.

Many react to this as not being of particular practical value (especially if they have trouble solving them). Consider this: studies with some striking theme stimulate and exercise imagination, accurate calculation, and most importantly, the intense search for absolute best moves *for both sides*. This last element is a terribly important skill, and one which is very hard to cultivate, even from the experience gained in practical play.

One thing to keep in mind: it is important to study, but it is also useful to consider from time to time exactly what one is exercising during work.

(Full solutions to the above studies are given at the back of the book on pages 219-220.)

## Instant Assessments

Here is an easy exercise. Flip through a large annotated book like an *Informator*, and assess the positions in diagrams after the briefest glance (a second or two, no more). Then check to see if you were right. This builds up the chess equivalent of peripheral vision. You can check to see if you neglect or overestimate some positional factors consistently – pawn structure, king safety, piece activity.

This sharpens your ability to assess positions and builds one's base of experience, which is also the cornerstone of intuition.

I have noted through tests that certain patterns do occur. Predominantly positional players often rate some aspect of the pawn structure very highly even when there are tremendous compensating factors present, aggressive players neglect static features of the position, etc.

## Objective distance

English GM Julian Hodgson is one of the few people I have ever met who uses the following technique for assessing positions. I have seen Julian get a new outlook on a particularly difficult position by setting it up again, but with the colours reversed. This is a very interesting practice. This simple change, which really changes nothing, can have a strong effect on a player. Quite often it helps bring an assessment to the surface, though it is hard to explain how. A position that

may look dull can look very pleasing if the colour of the pieces suddenly goes from white to black.

Nikolai Krogius mentions an experiment in *Chess Psychology* where the influence of colour was studied. He relates that a group of 10 first-category and candidate master players were given a rather well-known variation of the King's Indian and asked to assess the position and outline possible plans. Surprisingly, presenting the position with reversed colours led to profound difficulties. The position was not recognized, and unusual and inferior ideas were produced.

This shows how powerful the influence of the colours can be on our judgement, but tells us little about developing some kind of positive exercises. To be aware of this influence, and to become familiar with it, as Hodgson does, strikes me as a favourable kind of education.

I remember an old conversation with Julian on this topic. For some reason, in the next round Julian was trying to arrange playing the black side of the Sicilian Najdorf, despite having the white pieces. I suppose if you follow Hodgson's games, you might not be so surprised that Julian would be using preparation time on a psychological question aimed at losing the advantage of the first move. Anyway, we were discussing the move-order 1 c3 e5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 d3.

If you look at this on a board, I think you will share our automatic reaction here. It is impossible to take White's third move seriously. With the

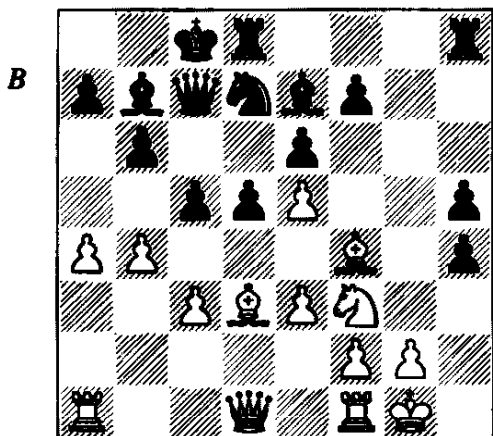
white pieces, 3  $\text{Qc3}$  is 'obviously correct'. But when the colours are reversed, 2...d6 leads to the razor-sharp Dragon, Najdorf, etc.

If memory serves, Julian decided the whole enterprise was too transparent and played a normal first move. However, the greater question of trying to view the board from all sides remains a Hodgson enterprise. It deserves further testing, as chess writers like to say when they find themselves short of material.

## Snapshots

Strategic ideas can be just as striking and useful to catalogue as tactical combinations. However, since this has not been done so often, and since the point of a fine positional move may not be immediately apparent, this is a bit more difficult than spotting a neat tactic.

The simplest way to start a collection of useful strategic ideas is to note any idea that makes a strong impression. I present some very famous ones here, chosen because I vividly remember the first time I encountered them.



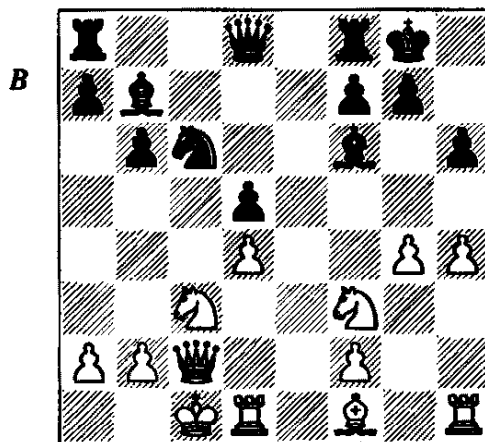
## B. Spassky – T. Petrosian Moscow Wch (7) 1966

1...c4! 2  $\text{Qe2}$  a6!!

Two little pawns moves by Black – why the fuss? The first avoids opening lines in front of his king, and the second prevents the white knight from leaping in to b5. What's so special about that?

The real point is Black's second move. It guarantees that White will never be able to open lines on the queenside. Now Black can reply to a5 with ...b5, and b5 with ...a5, in both cases sealing the palace from attack. This dainty manoeuvre thus freed Black for action elsewhere on the board and the result was a powerful win for the defending world champion.

This idea has obvious applications in other positions. Here is an example:



## S. Agdestein – H. Olafsson Gjøvik 1985

14...g6!

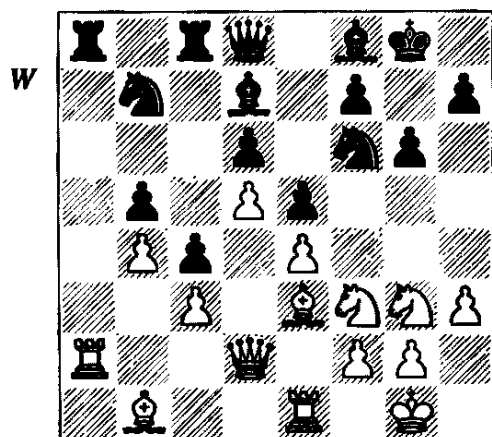
Planning ... $\text{Qg7}$  when Black can reply with ...h5 vs g5 and ...g5 vs h5.

Here the kingside-locking motif is slightly less safe, but the idea is the same and effective enough.

**15 h5**

15 g5 would open lines but the pawn sacrifice is probably insufficient. The structure chosen by White offers limited attacking chances, since the unopposed dark-squared bishop means that a white check on h7 is not fatal. The game was balanced after the further moves: 15...g5 16 ♖f5 ♘b4 17 ♘e5 ♙c8 18 ♖f3 ♙xe5 19 dxe5 ♖c7 20 ♘b1 ♖xe5 21 ♙g2 ♙a6 22 a3 d4 23 axb4 dxc3 24 ♖he1 c2+ 25 ♘xc2 ♖c7+ 26 ♘b1 ♖ad8 27 ♖f6 ♙d3+ 28 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 29 ♖xh6 ♖c8 30 ♖xg5+ ♘f8 31 ♖h6+ ♘g8 32 ♖g5+ ♘f8 33 ♖h6+ 1/2-1/2

**Controlling a file ... by blocking it**



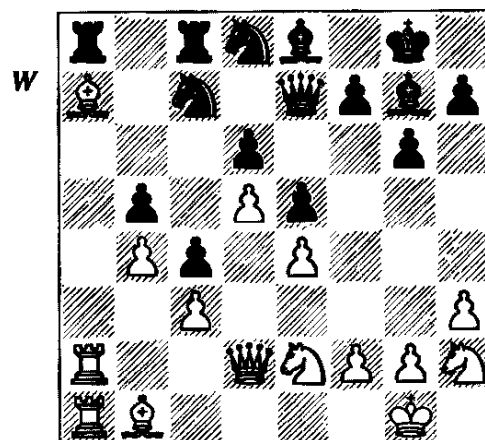
**A. Karpov – W. Unzicker**  
*Nice OL 1974*

This is perhaps the positional concept that has made the strongest impression on the widest range of chess players.

**1 ♙a7!**

A memorable and effective strategic motif: White not only avoids exchanges that might relieve Black's congestion, he creates a kind of shield behind which he prepares the domination of the a-file. The bishop can be supported by ♖e3 if necessary, so it cannot be shifted from a7. Black's inability to free his position by exchanges on the a-file led to death by strangulation over the entire board.

1...♘e8 2 ♙c2 ♘c7 3 ♖ea1 ♖e7 4 ♙b1 ♙e8 5 ♘e2 ♘d8 6 ♘h2 ♙g7 (D)



**7 f4!**

A slightly surprising decision, but Karpov judges the liberation of the g7-bishop and use of the e5-square to be more than offset by access to d4.

7...f6?! 8 f5 g5 9 ♙c2! ♙f7 10 ♘g3 ♘b7?! 11 ♙d1 h6 12 ♙h5 ♖e8 13 ♖d1 ♘d8 14 ♖a3 ♘f8 15 ♖1a2 ♘g8 16 ♘g4 ♘f8 17 ♘e3 ♘g8 18 ♙xf7+ ♘xf7 19 ♖h5

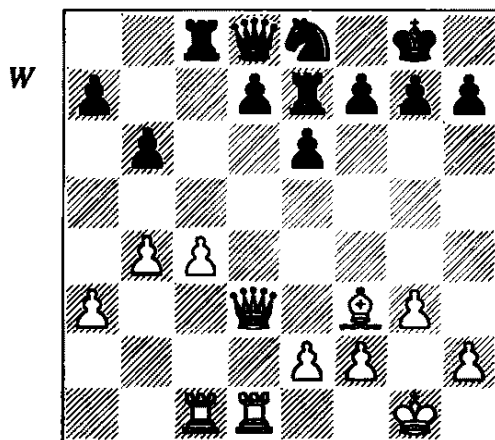
Now the weaknesses on this flank are more decisive than the grip on the queenside offered by the domination of the a-file.

**19...♘d8 20 ♖g6!**

An example of what Kotov calls a creeping move. White encroaches while asking that he be allowed access to the f5-square as well (after an exchange of queens).

20...♙f8 21 ♖h5 1-0

### An unexpected redeployment



**A. Karpov – U. Andersson**  
*Madrid 1973*

1 ♖b7!!

Another striking bishop manoeuvre by Karpov. Although the diagonal taken up from a6 is short, it plays a much larger role in the coming battle. It also allows White to play f2-f3 comfortably later, which would have hemmed in the bishop if it remained on a conventional square like g2. The concept is highly unusual, but shows a deep understanding of the most vital aspects of the position.

1...♜c7 2 ♖a6 ♜c6 3 ♚b3 ♚b8 4 ♚a4 ♜c7

If Black plays 4...♞c7 5 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 6 ♚xc6 ♜d2 7 c5! ♞xa6 8 cxb6 then the control of the c-file, powerful passed pawn and misplaced knight on

a6 will combine to give White a winning advantage.

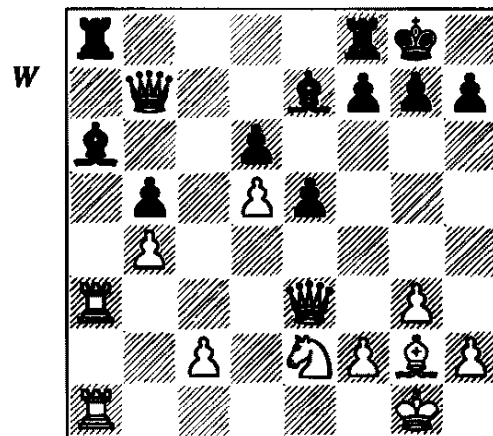
5 ♚b5 ♞f6 6 f3 d5 7 c5 h5 8 a4 ♜e8 9 cxb6 axb6 10 a5 ♜xc1 11 ♜xc1 ♚e5

11...bxa5 12 ♚xb8 ♜xb8 13 bxa5 wins for White.

12 ♚xb6 1-0

Note how the bishop on a6 still helps defend the kingside.

### Cannon-loading, and sophisticated double threats



**M. Rohde – W. Browne**  
*New York 1975*

Black is under severe pressure on the a-file and also has to contend with an annoying weakness on c6.

21 ♜1a2!!

A tremendous example of the 'cannon-loading' technique – the array of the tripled heavy pieces with the queen at the rear is sometimes called 'Alekhine's cannon' – as well as an example of a double strategic threat. White prepares ♚c3, which eyes the key squares a1 and c6. A spectacular example of this idea, and one of those



moves that is terribly hard to find without some prior experience of it. Once seen, the awesome strength of the move is obvious.

**21...f5**

If 21...♖fc8, 22 ♖h3 and Black cannot maintain watch over the c-file and the first rank (particularly the harried rook on a8). The rest of the game is less memorable, but for the sake of completeness:

22 ♖c3 f4 23 ♖c6 f3 24 ♖xf3 ♖ac8 25 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 26 ♖xa6 ♖xf3 27 ♖a8 ♖ff8 28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 c3 e4 30 ♖a6 ♖f7 31 ♖b6 ♖f6 32 ♖xd6 ♖xc3 33 ♖c6 ♖xc6 34 dxc6 ♖e5 35 ♖d4 ♖e7 36 ♖xb5 ♖b2 37 ♖f1 ♖d8 38 ♖e2 ♖c1 39 ♖d1 ♖g5 40 ♖c2 h5 41 ♖d6 ♖e7 42 ♖xe4 ♖xb4 43 ♖b3 ♖e1 44 ♖c4 ♖c7 45 ♖d5 g6 46 h3 ♖b4 47 f4 ♖e1 48 g4 hxg4 49 hxg4 ♖b4 50 f5 gxf5 51 gxf5 1-0

**"#15. Anything you do can get you shot, including nothing."** – one of 'Murphy's' Laws of Combat

Something to keep in mind when you are trying to find or choose between plans, or are drifting towards time-pressure. Act! You will go much further in chess, and probably most other things as well, if you err on the side of overconfidence. A slightly deluded optimist will succeed more often than a slightly cautious realist.

## The Power of Positive Thinking

*"There are people who are always optimistic. You should force yourself to*

*be optimistic, but I don't know how to do it. I try to be realistic, but sometimes I realize that it would be better for me if I were a bit more optimistic. ... Quite often it is a matter of understanding. A guy doesn't understand that he is worse and this helps him play much better. A strange phenomenon."* – Vladimir Kramnik, interviewed in *New in Chess*, No. 3/1996

I am in full agreement with Mr Kramnik's musings on optimism. If only one could learn what seems to be an inborn character trait. And while Kramnik may find the phenomenon strange in the relatively objective framework of the chessboard, the observation has been succinctly made before:

*"All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence, and then success is sure."* – Mark Twain/Samuel Clemens

Whenever this topic comes up, I am reminded of an anecdote concerning Mikhail Tal. I believe that GM Lev Alburt first told me this, while we were working together during the world championship in Merano. Scholars may be able to find a reference to it in Tal's writings. Then again, maybe it is a tall tale, but it is at any rate an intriguing one.

One of Alburt's pet themes back in 1981 was the wide variety of bizarre experiments he claimed Soviet authorities regularly conducted trying to increase their chess dominance

even further<sup>1</sup>. Lev told me that one test involved hypnotizing a reasonably strong club player, after he had played a few offhand games with Tal (and lost horribly). According to the story, the player was hypnotized into believing he was Paul Morphy. His first action before the rematch with Tal was to demand a fee! The games he played under hypnosis reportedly showed a remarkable rise in ability, with Tal now having real difficulty winning. The experiment was curtailed due to extreme stress on the part of the amateur. I suppose that Morphy was having a very hard time coming to terms with the unexpected strength of his opponent?

### Share the workload

Much of this book sets out to enable the reader to find ways to train him or herself. There are some aspects of this book however, which require some outside assistance. Finding some kinds of test material can hardly be done alone, since the research removes any element of mystery or surprise needed to provide a real quiz situation. Since it is often impractical to acquire a trainer, a natural solution is to team up

with a training partner. Finding a player with whom one can cooperate is an important part of the training process. It can often be especially instructive to work with a player who has a marked contrast in style. Even in a situation with players of approximately the same strength, one can learn a great deal by presenting different types of material and becoming acquainted with a different outlook on positions. Chess players often tend to be too individualistic or competitive to consider this kind of natural cooperation, but it is practical and beneficial.

### Positive Reinforcement

Are you plagued by bad nerves or vacillating self-confidence? I know I am. So I was struck by a passage from a tournament report in *Inside Chess* by Patrick Wolff some years ago. He recorded his feelings as he was on the verge of winning a game that was instrumental to his grandmaster title. His reaction just before he made a move which would force resignation was basically: sit back, relax, and savour this moment.

I found this a potentially tremendous technique for treating a shaky

---

1 The historically minded reader may remember the fun-filled days of the previous world championship match in Baguio City 1978, which featured yoghurt disputes, parapsychologists, and the Ananda Marga. Merano 1981 was tame by comparison, but I was present when Alburt and Korchnoi discussed what they felt was the use of mind-disturbing technology aimed at the challenger (Korchnoi), both during games and in one of his hotel suites. Alburt's stories of various experiments were interesting, but to avoid legal repercussions, I prefer to wait and see if previously classified material becomes released before relating others.

nervous constitution. My natural reactions would be quite different: doubt that the game was really in the bag, fear that any kind of relaxation could jeopardize victory, followed by a general trembling of the limbs, and anxiety that things could still be fouled up even if I didn't relax. If one could learn to accentuate – and enjoy! – the positive aspects of important sporting moments, what a boon this would be.

When I next spoke to Patrick I mentioned these impressions to him. Typically (i.e., since he didn't need to learn this), Patrick did not even remember writing this, nor had he ever considered its usefulness.

Despite the impression it made on me, I find it hard to implement. The first chance I had to try it out afterwards – having been offered a draw which guaranteed clear first place in a fairly important tournament – I lunged across the table with my hand out far too quickly to exercise any rational thought. Perhaps you will have better luck.

### **Rationing energy**

Here are a few interesting and divergent opinions. Botvinnik offered this piece of advice – that one should calculate variations on one's own time, and contemplate strategic subtleties on the opponent's time. This may suit you, and it has the advantages of keeping restless, unconcentrated souls at the board. Presumably, the strategic musings are less tiring. It goes slightly against my current feeling that one

should try to mesh the two different types of thought when working at the board, but it is a thought-provoking suggestion.

There is also the strolling school, that feel that you gain more by an occasional walk. The discomfort of being rooted at the board for hours should be combated, and one can still contemplate positions while on the go. Smyslov was a firm believer in this.

Recently I read Judit Polgar saying sometimes you shouldn't think, just go for a walk. How often, she notes, your opponent does something completely unexpected, and then you have just wasted your time and energy.

My own feeling is that players in general (i.e. the non-super types) do not concentrate enough, and should aim to put in as full a day as possible at the board. It can be very disheartening to meet an opponent who gets a great deal done on one's own thinking time. The benefits of an occasional break are also clear though, so try to strike an appropriate balance.

### **Write it down**

If you have an interesting idea, write it down. If you analyse a position, write it down. If you decide on a basic opening repertoire, write it down. Recording your thoughts make them easier to remember, and give you something to refer to when you eventually forget them. I find I often lose the notebook, but it doesn't hurt to try. And paper is still a more secure format than disk(ette), so I suppose the up-to-date

advice would be: print it out. [and back it up – *editor's note.*]

### **Words of Wisdom**

And finally, a passage that captures beautifully my feelings about the learning process:

*"Many years ago a very wise man named Bernard Baruch took me aside and put his arm around my shoulder. 'Harpo, my boy,' he said, 'I'm going*

*to give you three pieces of advice, three things you should always remember.'*

*"My heart jumped and I glowed with expectation. I was going to hear the magic password to a rich, full life from the master himself. 'Yes, sir?' I said. And he told me the three things.*

*"I regret that I've forgotten what they were."*

*– Harpo Speaks, Harpo Marx with Rowland Barber, Limelight Editions*

# Appendix 1: Mating Patterns

Here is a collection of mating patterns. Most are classics, all are useful. Many have names, a few have stories attached. All of this makes them a little easier to catalogue and remember. In the end, the names are not so important, and it makes little difference whether you know them as Damiano's Mate or Vera, Chuck and Dave. What is important is that you become very familiar with their faces and never forget them.

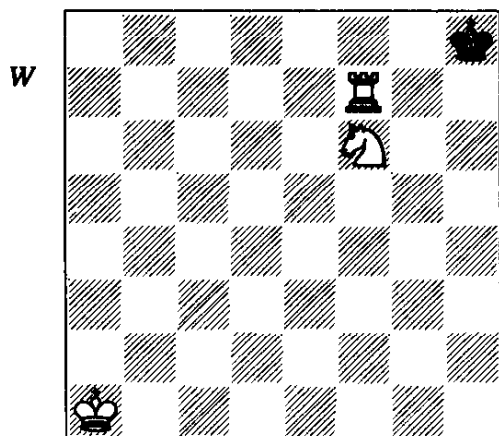
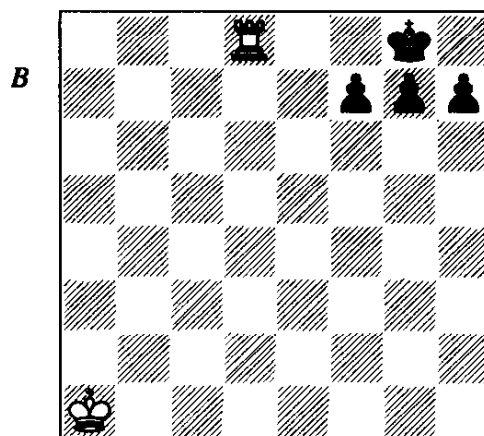
There are certainly grounds to dispute some of the nomenclature. I have seen Blackburne's name linked to mating patterns based on the open h-file, for example. I hope that we can avoid petty arguments. Just worry about getting acquainted with them.

Diagrams are placed at the critical moments, especially in *the final position which is the key element of the pattern*. Learning the basic pattern is not the difficult part. You must become so well acquainted with them that you sense their presence behind the more complicated positions that precede them. So well, that you don't need to calculate them, but know they are there and so can work out the harder variations around them, or those lines

that lead to them. And, most difficult of all, to learn how to build up the positions to reach them.

In a typical attacking text-book, one is presented with the pattern and then given game fragments or quiz positions that contain them. Since that has been done quite a bit before, I suggest an alternative method (not that there is anything wrong with the one mentioned – it is very effective; it is, as they say, beyond the scope of this book). When you find examples of these basic patterns in games, or analysis, or combination exercises, take time to note them down, so that you have some especially memorable examples. I have done this with a few positions to illustrate this technique. In this way you can build up an arsenal of essential weapons and make sure that they stick in your memory. For exercise, combination-solving is the best way to test and increase the knowledge gained. This kind of work has been likened to a musician practising scales, which is a very apt comparison.

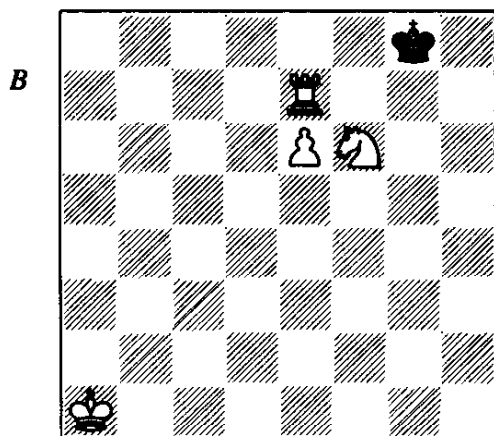
(Some positions have been 'quoted' from V. Vuković's book *The Art of Attack in Chess*. VV = V. Vuković)

**1) Arabian****2) Back-rank mate**

The rook can also be on g6 – a kind of reflected Arabian pattern well worth noting. See also the next diagram.

**1 ♖h7#**

So called because the moves of the knight and rook have not changed since ‘antiquity’, and this pattern has been known since the dawn of the game.

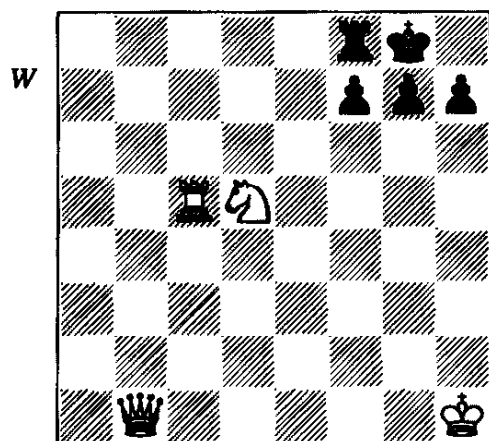
**VV’s Arabian**

**1...♔h8**

**1...♔f8 2 ♖f7#.** “A pattern worth remembering” – VV. The pawn’s task can be fulfilled by other pieces, especially the king in endings.

**2 ♖h7#**

## 3) Anastasia's mate

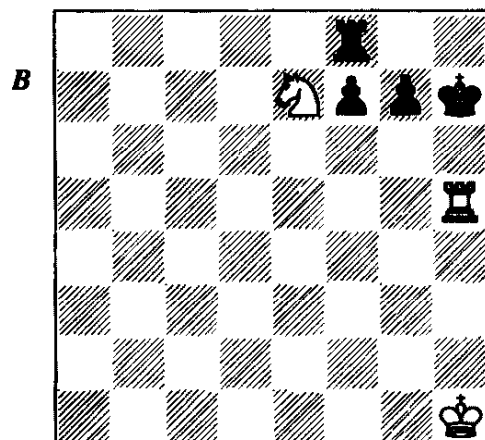
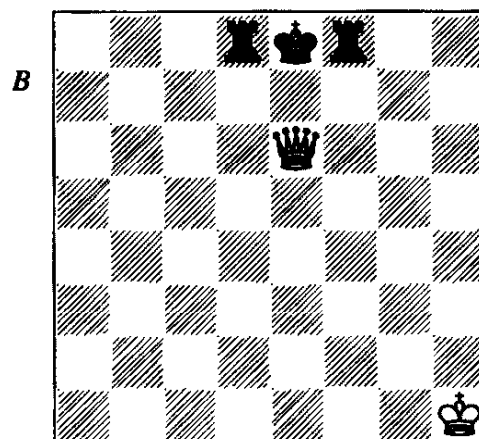


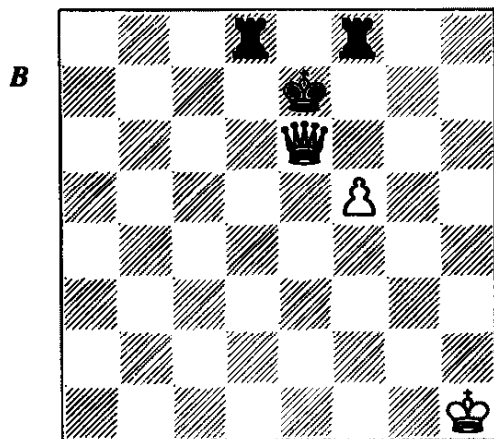
This mate even has a story attached: The name comes from W. Heinse's novel *Anastasia and Chess* (1803), in which this mate is recorded. (VV).

1 ♖e7+ ♔h8 2 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 3 ♖h5# (D)

## 4) Epaulette mate

So-called since the black rooks are (unfortunate) ornaments on the shoulders of the black king.

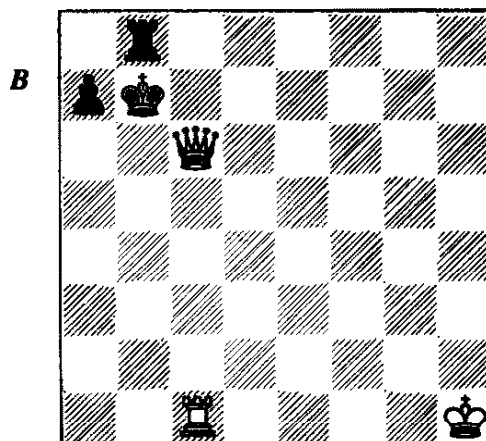


**5) Swallow-tail (VV) / Guéridon**

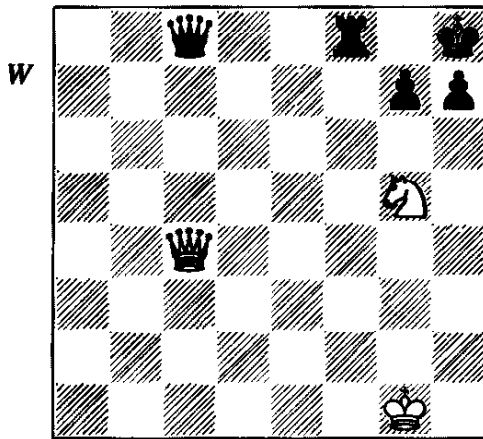
Vuković's name sticks better in mind, though I learned the Guéridon from Renaud and Kahn.

**6) Dovetail mate**

Strangely enough, this variant of the queen mates does not seem to be widely catalogued. So I propose it in this form.



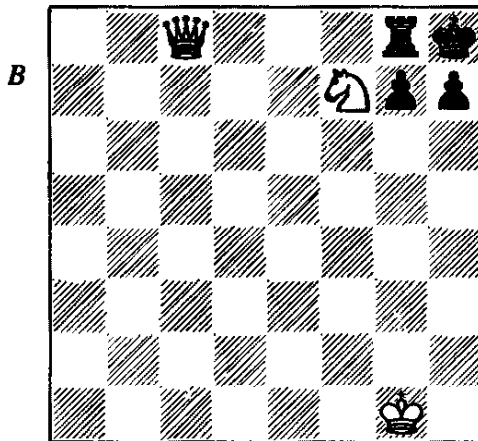
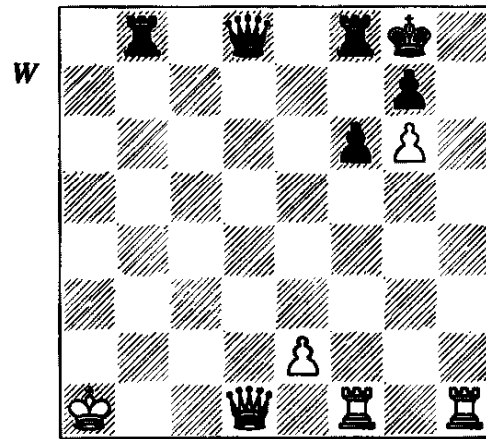


**7) Smothered Mate (Philidor)**

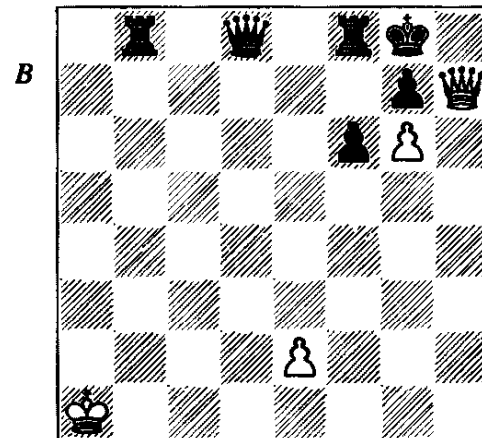
1 ♖f7+ ♔g8

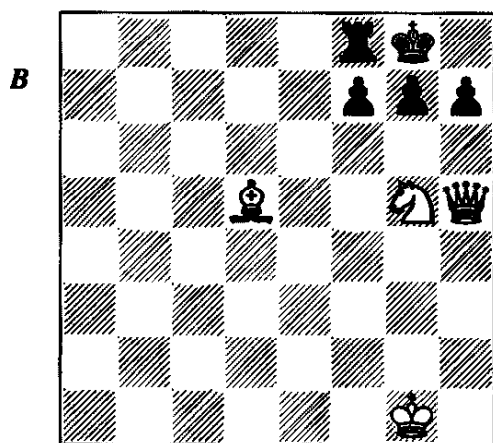
1... ♜xf7 2 ♜xc8+ (back rank).

2 ♜h6++ ♔h8 3 ♜g8+! ♜xg8 4 ♜f7# (D)

**8) Damiano's Mate**

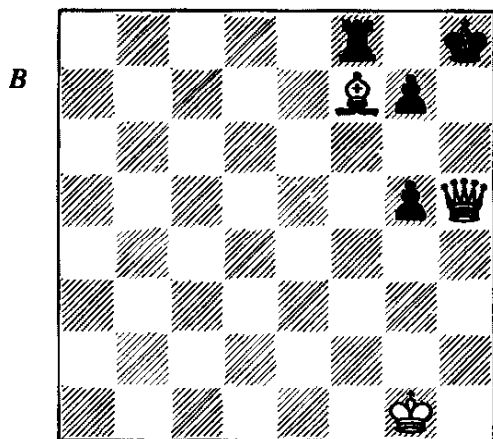
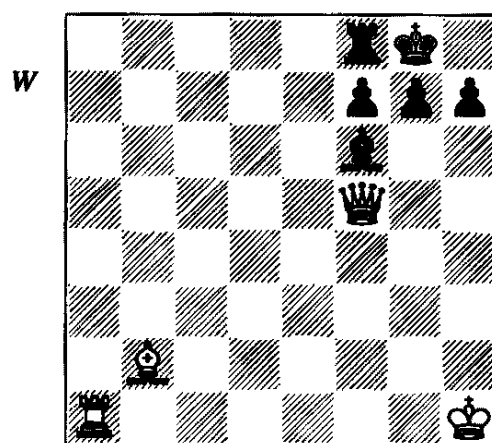
1 ♜h8+ ♔xh8 2 ♜h1+ ♔g8 3 ♜h8+ ♔xh8 4 ♜h1+ ♔g8 5 ♜h7# (D)



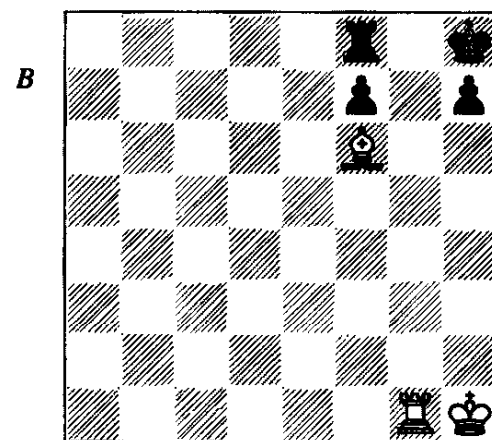
**9) Greco's Mate (VV)**

1...h6 2 ♖xf7+ ♔h8 3 ♕g6 hxg5 4 ♕h5# (D)

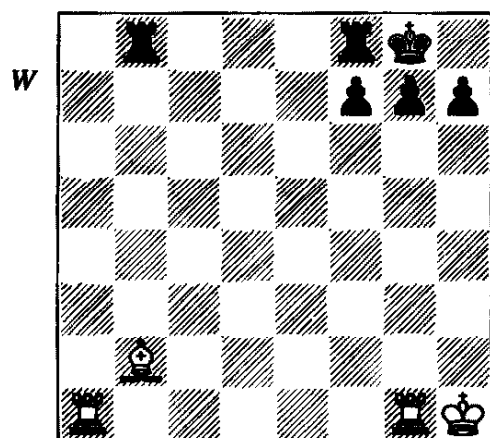
This picture is associated with Greco's mate.

**10) Morphy's mate (VV)**

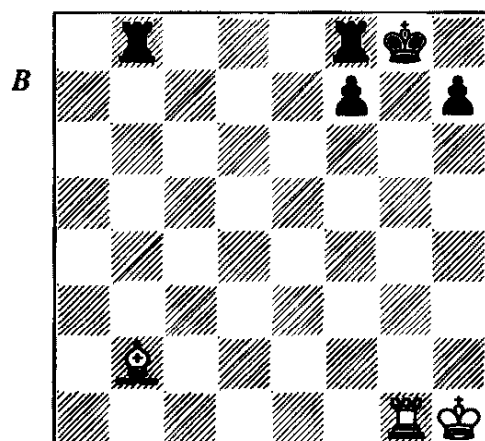
1 ♕xf6 gxf6 2 ♖g1+ ♔h8 3 ♖xf6# (D)



## 11) Pillsbury's mate (VV)

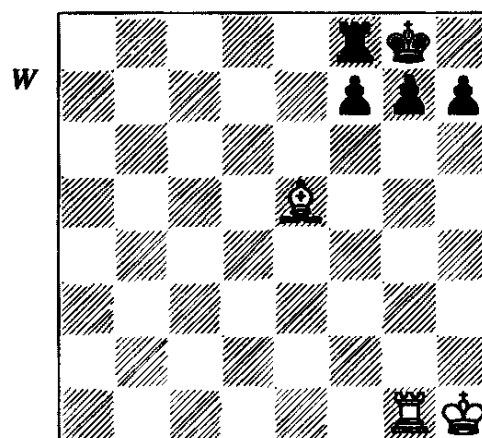


1 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 2 ♖g8++! ♔xg8 3  
♖g1# (D)



Obviously a close relative of the  
Morphy 'family'.

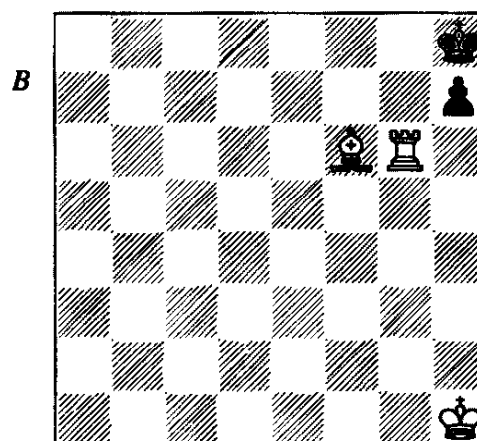
## 12) 'Morphy's concealed mate' (VV)



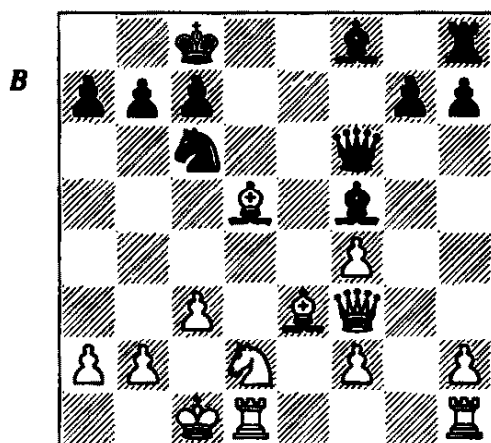
1 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 2 ♖xf7+

To eliminate a potential interposi-  
tion on f6.

2... ♔g8 3 ♖g7+ ♔h8 4 ♖g6+ ♖f6 5  
♖xf6# (D)

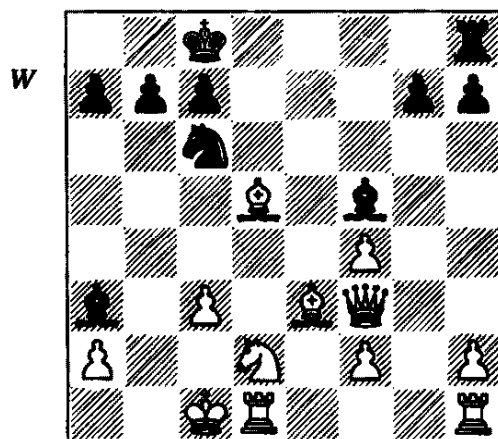


## 13) Boden's mate

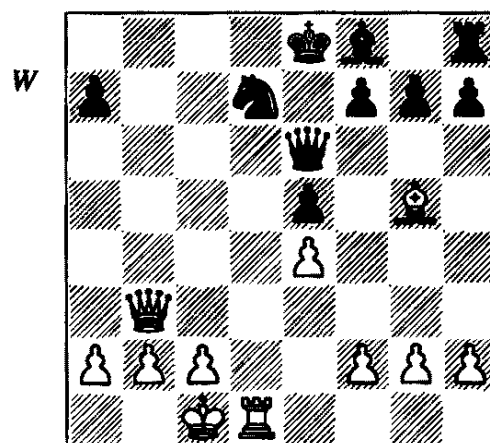


G. MacDonnell – S. Boden  
London 1869

1... ♔xc3+! 2 bxc3 ♔a3# (D)



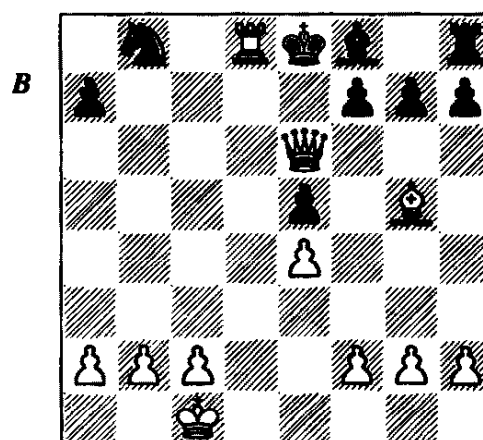
## 14) Opera Mate



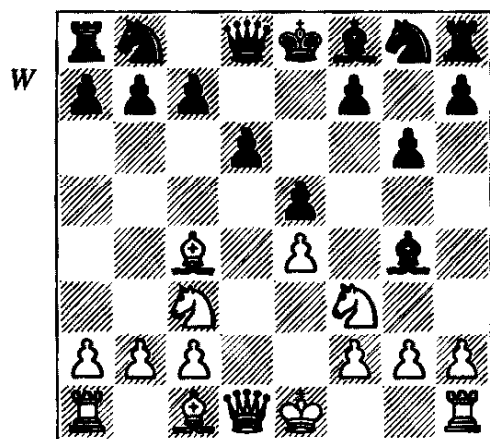
P. Morphy – Duke of Brunswick  
& Count Isouard  
Paris 1858

I'm tempted to call *this* Morphy  
mate, but the name is taken.

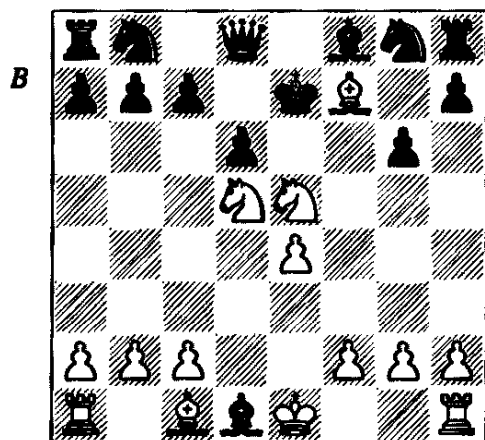
1 ♔b8+ ♖xb8 2 ♔d8# (D)



## 15) Legall's mate

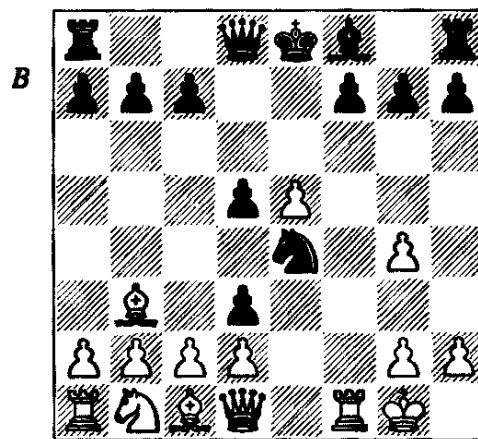


1 ♖xe5! ♙xd1? 2 ♙xf7+ ♔e7 3  
♜d5# (D)



This is more of historical interest – it obviously only happens in the opening, and if it occurs often something is wrong with the level of opposition.

## 16) 'Max Lange's mate' (VV)



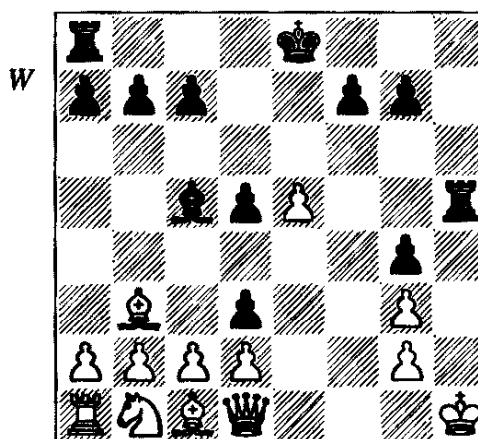
A. Anderssen – Max Lange  
Bratislava 1859

1...♙c5+ 2 ♔h1 ♜g3+ 3 hxg3 ♝g5  
The theme is a complete opening of the h-file.

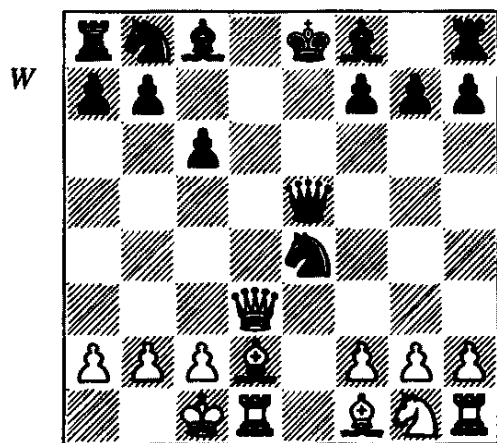
4 ♜f5 h5! 5 ♜xg5

5 gxh5 ♝xf5 6 g4 ♝f2.

5...hxg4+ 6 ♜h5 ♜xh5# (D)

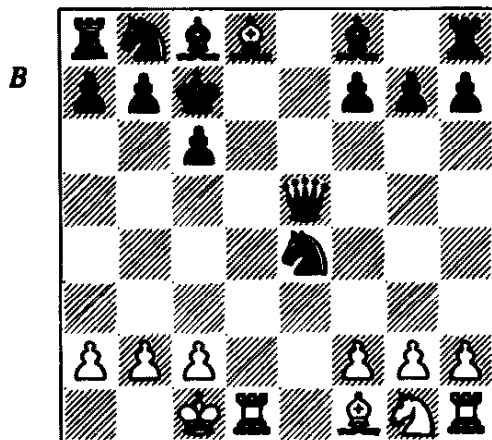


## 17) Réti's mate



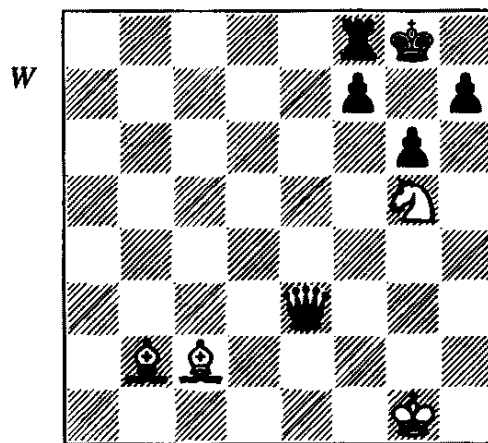
R. Réti – S. Tartakower  
Vienna 1911

1 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 2 ♘g5++ ♔c7  
2... ♕e8 3 ♚d8# is the Opera mate.  
3 ♘d8# (D)

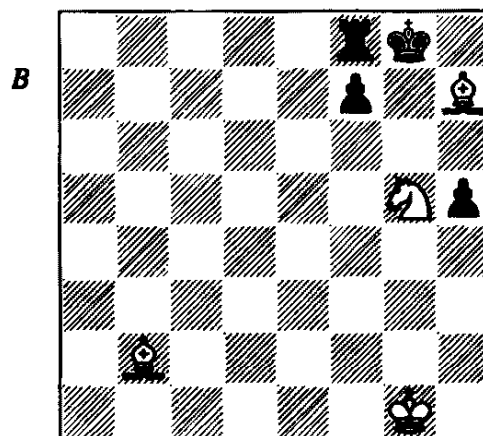


A rare and lovely picture.

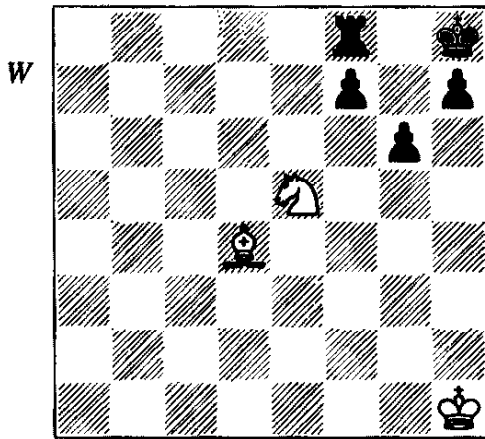
## 18) Blackburne's mate (VV)



1 ♖h3 h5 2 ♖xh5! gxh5 3 ♘h7# (D)

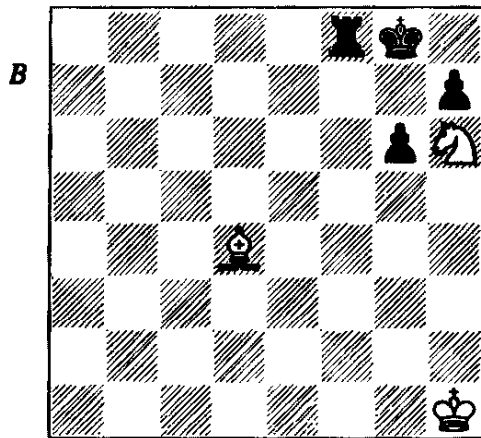


19) ♔+♘ vs ...g6 + castled king (VV)



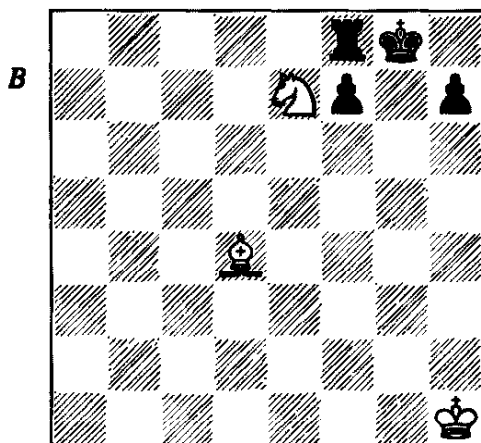
There are two versions:

a) 1 ♘xf7++ ♔g8 2 ♘h6# (D)

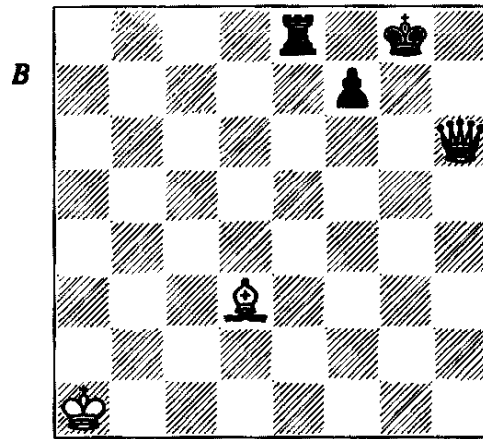


This version is the more common.

b) 1 ♘xg6++ ♔g8 2 ♘e7# (D)

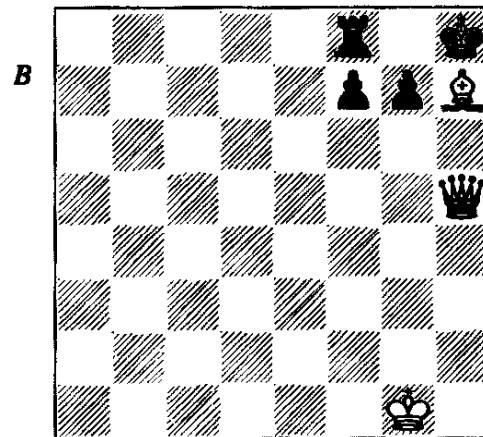


20) Queen and Bishop mate



1 ♔h7+ ♔h8 2 ♔g6+ ♔g8 3 ♕h7+ ♔f8 4 ♕xf7#

20a) Queen and Bishop tandem



1...g6

This opens an escape route via g7/f6.

2 ♕h6!

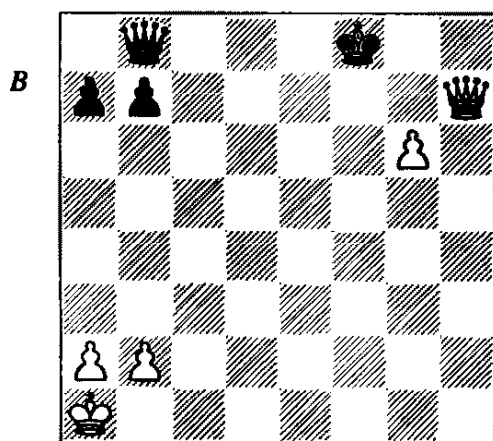
See the ♕+♔ mate above.

This is an extremely important pattern for two reasons. First it illustrates a very useful theme leading to a common mate. Secondly, the array of queen and bishop on the h-file is so potent that it becomes a kind of end in itself. During attacking calculations

one will often be able to stop early knowing that if one can achieve this battery of forces around the black king then one's attack will be successful.

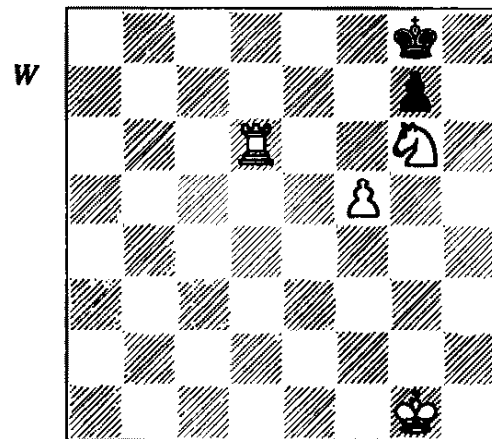
Here is another example of a basic attacking pattern that is often mate, but can be just as useful when it does not quite end the game immediately:

**♔+g-pawn**

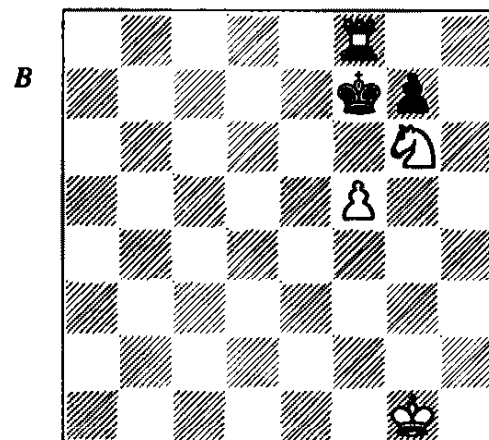


The usual primary threat in this attacking array is mate on f7. Here Black can meet this with 1...♔f4. However, then comes 2 g7+ and the pawn promotes with check next move. Black's only hope of defending against this attacking team is a move that fully guards f7 and g7.

21) ♖+♘+♙ (VV)

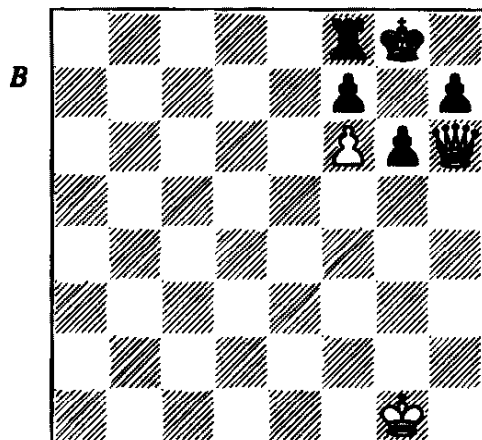
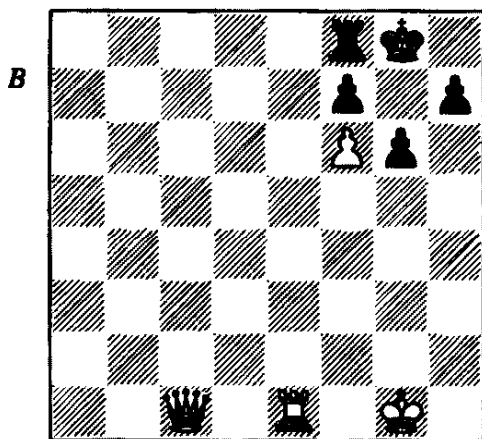


1 ♖d8+ ♔f7  
1...♔h7 2 ♖h8#.  
2 ♖f8# (D)



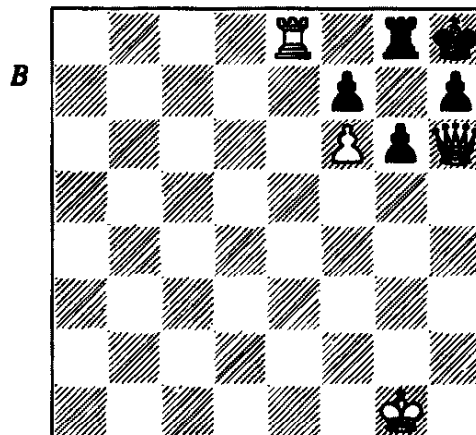
Again, a little investigation will uncover similar, and equally useful variations on many of these patterns. The position above can take place anywhere on the board.



**'Geographical' Mating patterns****Mate on g7****Mate on g7**

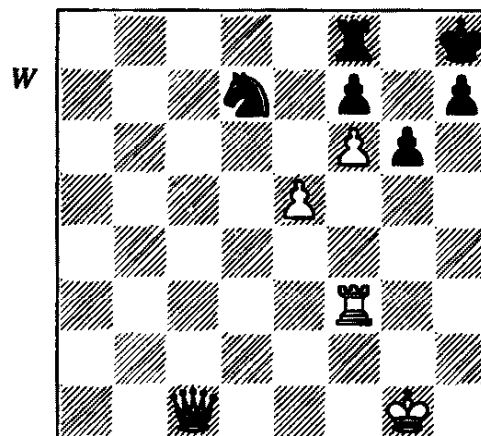
If Black is to play, the most common defence is ...♙h8 and ...♖g8. There are also common dangers...

1...♙h8 2 ♜h6 ♖g8 3 ♜e8! (D)



White will mate on g7.

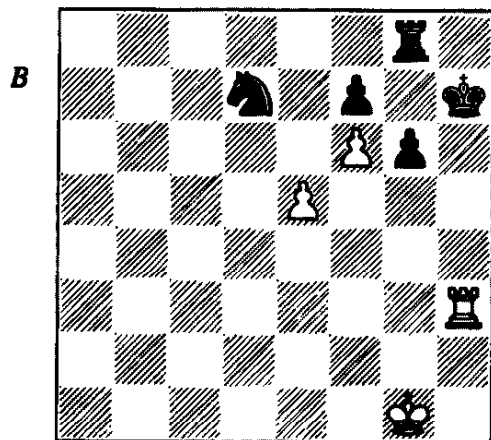
Now some related mates where the decisive blow falls on other squares, though clearly the chief factor is the preliminary weakness on g7.

**Mate on g7/h7**

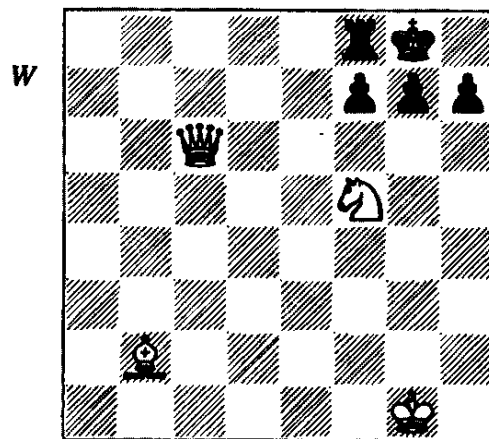
1 ♜h6 ♖g8

Black plans ...♘f8 to cover up h7.

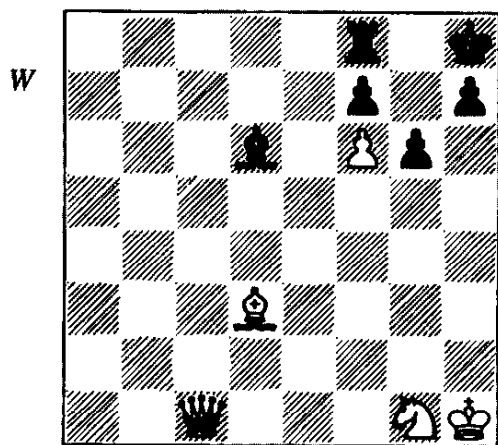
2 ♜xh7+! ♙xh7 3 ♜h3# (D)



g7 related: ♖+♗

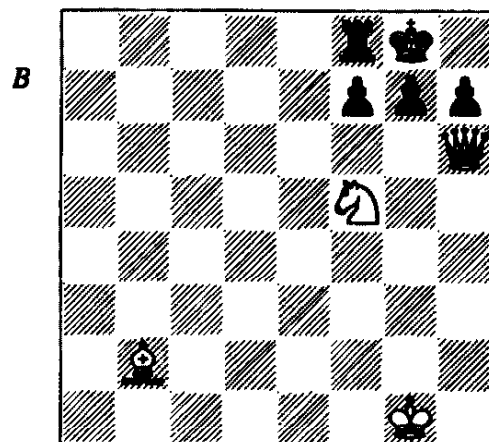


**Mate on g7/h7/f7**



Another g7 mate, related to the knight + bishop mate.

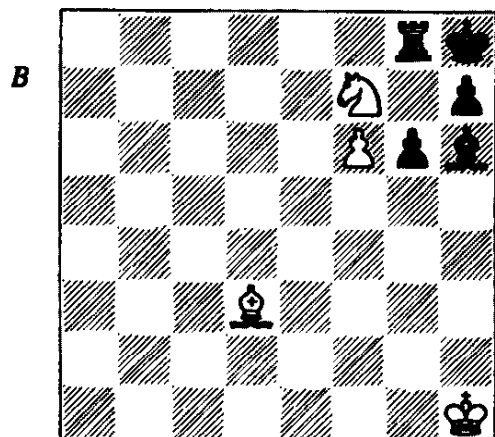
1 ♖h6! (D)



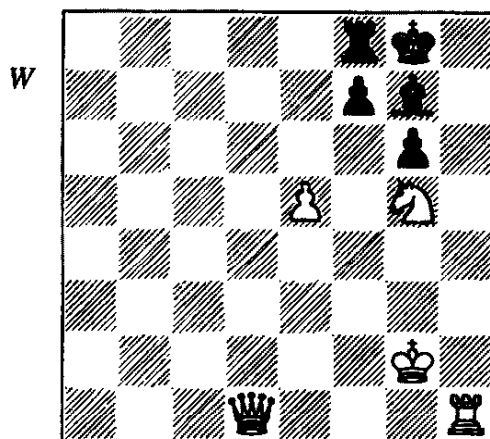
1 ♖h6 ♜g8 2 ♗f3 ♗f8 3 ♗g5!

Now both h7 and f7 creak.

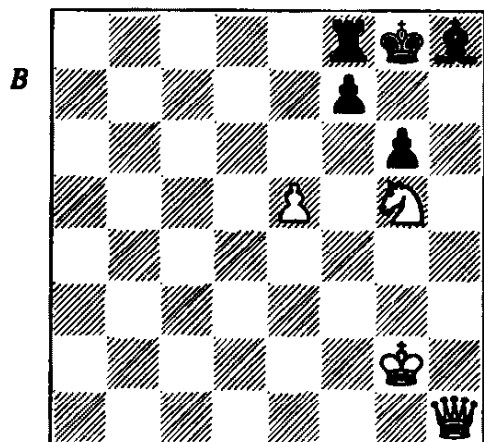
3... ♗xh6 4 ♗xf7# (D)



**h7 and f7**

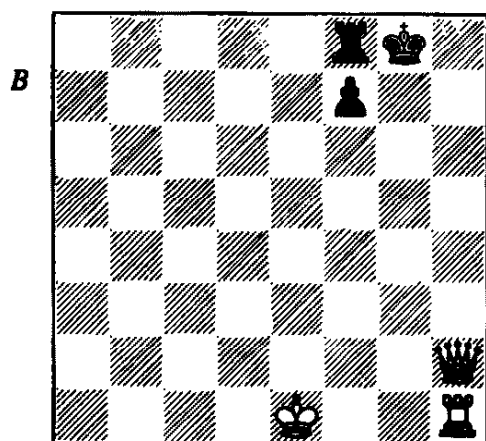


1 ♖h8+! ♙xh8  
 1... ♔xh8 2 ♕h1+.  
 2 ♕h1 (D)



2... ♖e8 3 ♕h7+ ♔f8 4 ♕xf7#

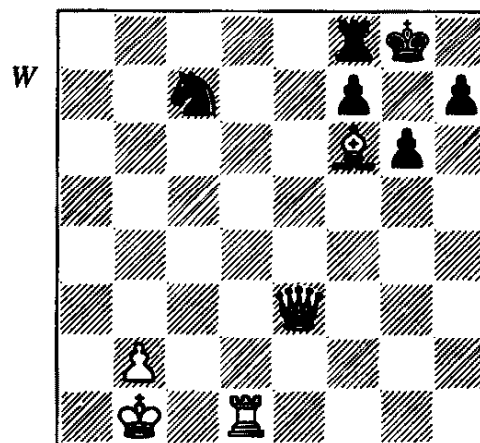
Open h-file (VV)



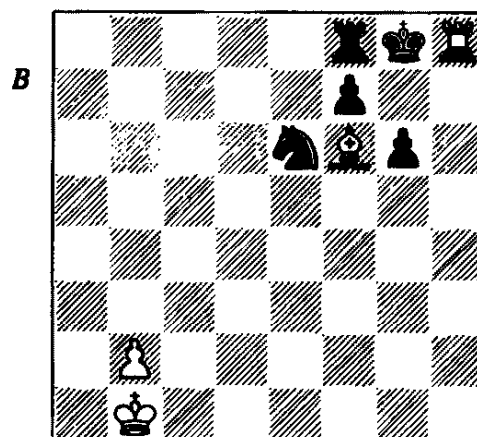
Vuković's illustration of a mating attack on the h-file.

1... ♔g7  
 1... f6 2 ♕h7#.  
 2 ♕h6+ ♔g8 3 ♕h8#

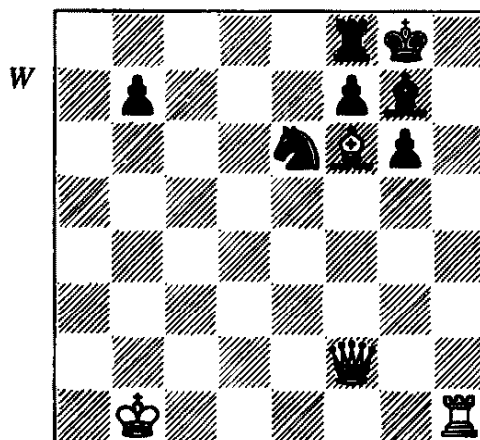
h-file



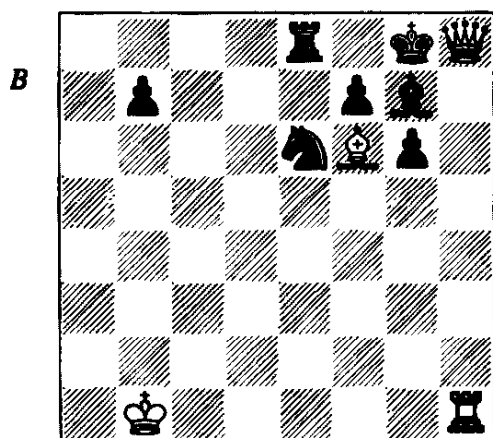
1 ♕h6 ♔e6 2 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 3 ♖h1+ ♔g8 4 ♖h8# (D)



h-file

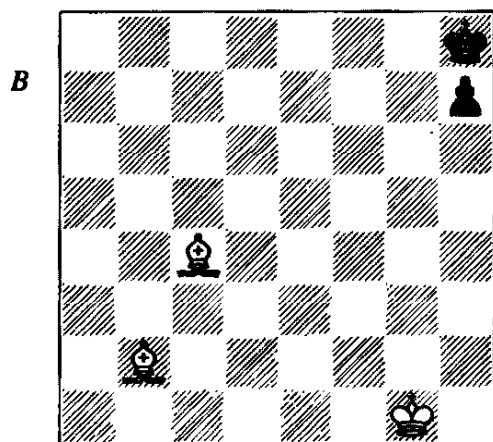


1 ♖h4 ♜e8 2 ♖h8+! (D)

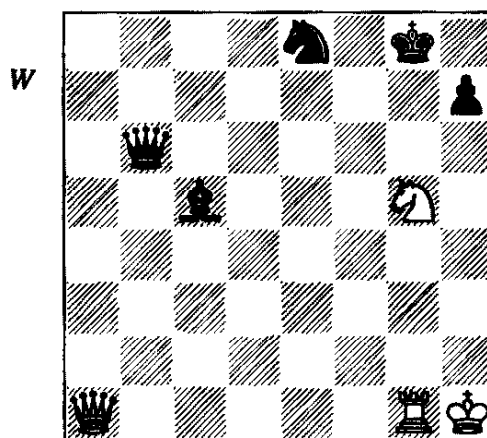


A well-known finish which uses the tactical motif known as the X-ray – White’s bishop influences h8 ‘through’ the black bishop.

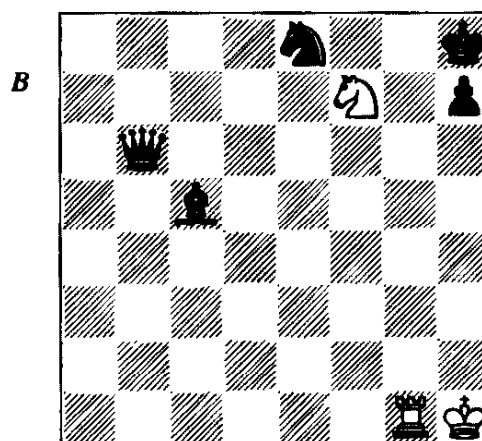
### Two Bishops mate



### Corner Mate



1 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 2 ♖f7# (D)



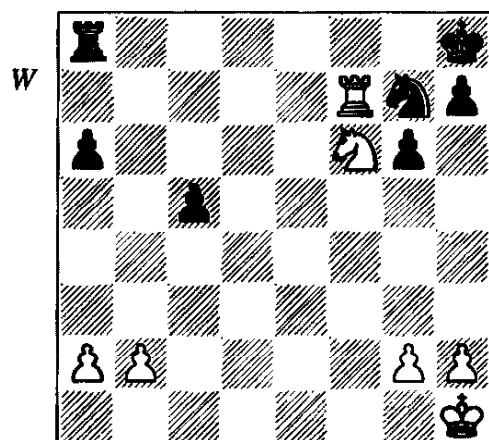
A fairly common picture, with no fixed name, and one of several mates that one might classify ‘geographically’, perhaps as one of the family of corner mates. You can surely think of, or find, others.

### Pattern Collecting

Here are some examples of building a picture gallery for the patterns. The Arabian has always had a special appeal for me, since it is both simple and effective, and can occur even in the endgame. After seeing these positions,

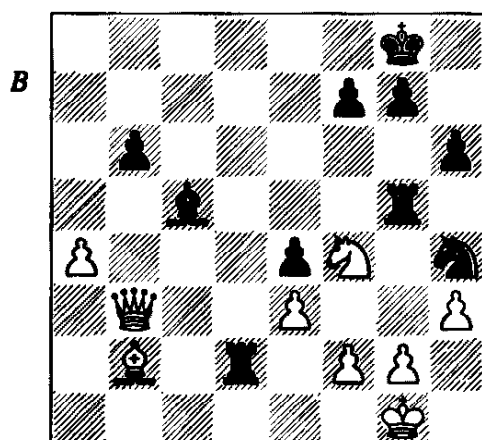
one should be much more ready to exploit one's opportunities.

### Arabian



**M. Petursson – P. Lyrberg**  
*Reykjavik 1996*

Here Black lost on time (1-0). Marger Petursson felt cheated! This example of the Arabian bind is so powerful that one player present wondered if the position might be lost for Black with no pawns on the board (!). (White only needs to march his king to g6...)



**J. Sunye Neto – G. Kasparov**  
*Graz 1981*

**41...♖f3+!**

This could have led to a beautiful Arabian finish if White had chosen the reply...

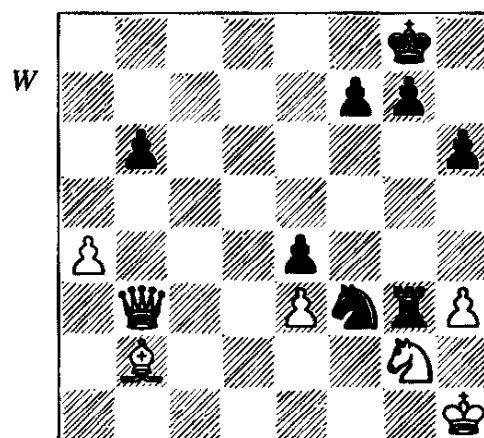
**42 ♔h1**

Kasparov then planned:

**42...♗xe3! 43 fxe3**

**43 ♖e6 ♗xf2 44 gxf3 ♗f1+ 45 ♔h2 exf3 46 ♖xg5 ♗f4#.** 43 gxf3 (not mentioned by Kasparov) 43...♗xf4 looks decisive since 44 ♗c1 is met by 44...e3!).

**43...♗dxg2!! 44 ♖xg2 ♗g3 (D)**

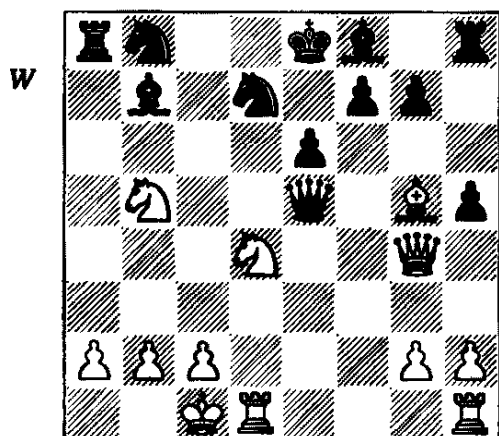


We have a gorgeous illustration of the (reflected) Arabian pattern. Note again how effective this mating net is – a move like 45 ♗e5 does nothing as Black's grip on h2 is complete. Also note that there were many tricky side-variations in Kasparov's combination. Having this pattern 'in stock' would simplify the calculation considerably.

### Opera Mate

This position and continuation is given in Polugaevsky's masterpiece, *Grandmaster Preparation* (or *Grandmaster Achievement*, as it was later

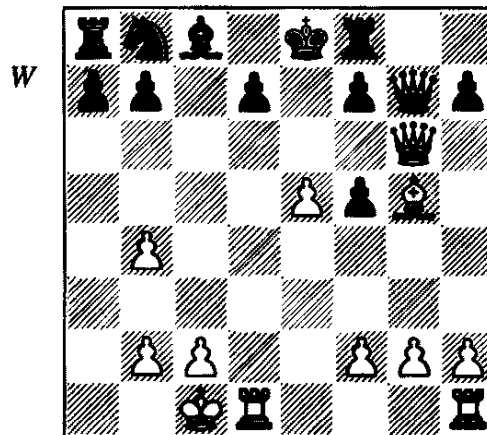
re-christened) and has even occurred in practice more than once.



**Camps - Olesen**  
*Corr.*

1 ♖c7+! ♜xc7 2 ♘xe6 ♜e5 3 ♘c7+! ♜xc7 4 ♜e2+ ♘e5 5 ♜xe5+! ♜xe5 6 ♜d8# (1-0)

Here is an entertaining example from personal practice.



**J. Tisdall - Lee**  
*London 1981*

**15 e6!! d5**

Or:

1) 15... ♜xg7 16 exd7+ ♘xd7 17 ♜he1+ ♜e5 18 ♜xe5+ ♘xe5 19 ♜d8#.

2) 15... fxe6 16 ♜e7#.

3) 15... ♜xe6 16 ♜he1 and wins the queen.

16 ♜xd5 ♘c6 17 e7 ♘xe7 18 ♜d8+! ♜xd8 19 ♜xf8+ 1-0

# Appendix 2: Common Tactical Themes

These examples may strike some readers as being simplistic. Bear in mind that no matter how simple, they are also the essential ingredients of terribly complicated tactical recipes. They are also most easily remembered in distilled form. I have tried to use examples that are either famous, simple, or typical, to make them as memorable as possible.

They should become as familiar to you as the basic words of your native tongue.

The *Encyclopedia of Chess Middlegames* (Combinations) [ECM] must be reviewed in the context of presenting a catalogue of common tactical patterns.

ECM is a very useful reference work, and perhaps the best collection of combinations ever compiled. It is huge, and attempts to categorize basic motifs. It also has a drawback of design when used as a learning tool, which is in some sense unavoidable. One flaw is that complicated combinations usually have several themes engaged at once, and may not strike the solver as being properly catalogued. Indeed, except for very simple examples to illustrate the essence of a theme, the presence of multiple themes is more the rule than the exception.

The other flaw is that by sorting the material, information about the solution is supplied. Since a problem solving situation is already artificially helpful (since the student is told that there is a solution present in the position), stating what type of theme is involved further dilutes the educational potential. Of course, if some positions are misclassified, then *this* problem is less acute, but then the book is less of an encyclopedia...

## ***Ab uno disce omnes*<sup>1</sup>**

Here you will get an explanation of separate themes. Then you are ready to go out and use them, or test your acquired knowledge with combinational quizzes. If you use a book that sorts the problems by theme (which is surprisingly common), I would suggest hopping around in the book in order to handicap yourself.

Solving a series of problems centred around one motif is a good way to acquaint yourself thoroughly with that particular pattern, but it quickly becomes non-productive. Once you have seen a few examples of each, then you should shelve the training wheels and try to accomplish as much as possible on your own.

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1 From one learn all.

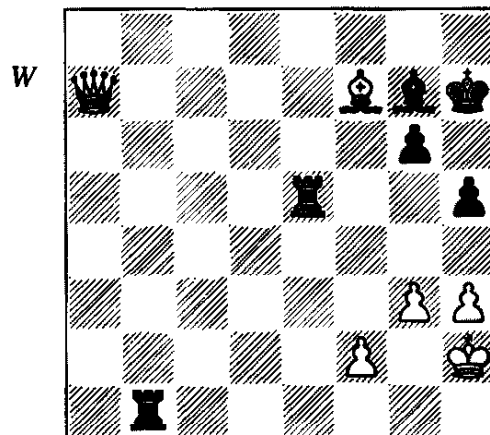
Now let's have a look at the themes. By all means try to find the winning move before reading about the diagrammed position. Out of respect for the *ECM*'s attempt to bring some kind of classifiable order to the subject, I will follow their taxonomy as much as I can. There are some points of conflict however. Sometimes *ECM* labels *types of combination*, and these may include several *themes*.

### Double Attack/Check

Double Attack is the essence of any successful operation. It would be more accurate to say Multiple Attack, since there is often a presence of, or a need for, more. I imagine the wording has arisen because a double is the limit on checking. Almost all the other themes have some element of multiple attack contained in them.

Often when examining tactics, we are confronted with vivid, violent examples. It is essential to remember that to be successful, the threats do not have to be 'vulgar'. You will eventually find that it is painful enough to be confronted with a threat to win a tempo and spoil your pawn structure, and it is these kind of double threats that are the most insidious.

So it is important to remember that a double attack can have many forms. The simplest is the fork, where one piece threatens more than one opponent at a time. All pieces can fork, even pawns and kings. The knight fork is the most familiar, as its move is unlike that of any other piece. Here is a queen fork:



**J. Donner – H. Bouwmeester**  
*Munich OL 1958*

**1 ♕xg6+!**

This is a destruction sacrifice, to set up a wide selection of double attacks.

**1... ♖xg6 2 ♖a6+!**

In this position Black cannot parry all the looming chances for a double attack. The move itself is also a double attack: Check and the threat of ♖d3+ forking.

**2... ♖h7**

The alternatives also meet double attacks: 2... ♖f7 3 ♖a2+ forking, or 2... ♖g5 3 f4+ with a pawn fork.

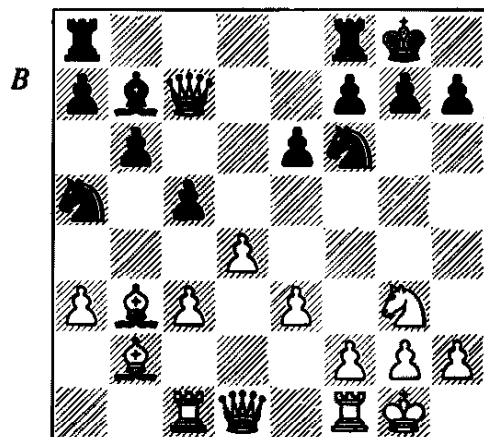
**3 ♖d3+ 1-0**

Double attack is the fundamental tactical weapon. You will find that most of the themes here are primarily sophisticated ways of utilizing or creating multiple threats.

### A more subtle kind of double threat

Since the multiple attack is the basic building block of tactics, I will give a less violent example to indicate that any two things can be attacked:





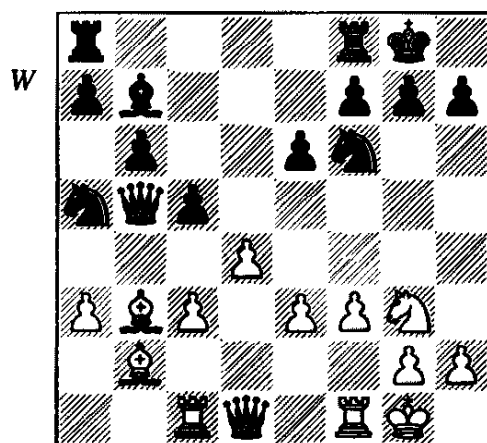
**D. Rivera – R. Fischer**  
*Varna OL 1962*

1...♔c6

This threatens mate, and...

2 f3 ♔b5 (D)

...skewering the bishops.

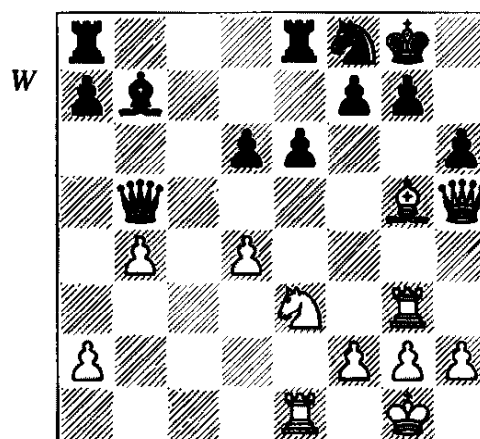


3 ♖a4 ♔xb2 0-1

### Discovered Attack/Check

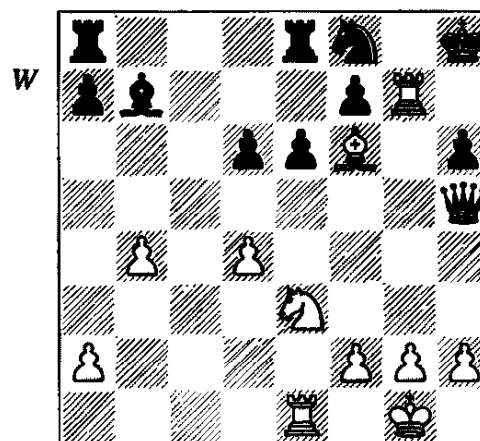
Often rates the number two spot on the theme list, presumably because we are still in violent mood. The aspect of one piece making a direct attack while unveiling a second attack from another piece gives this motif a distinct identifying characteristic, but is still

basically a double attack. The basic mechanism of a discovery is a double attack, where one of the attackees is very valuable, which usually means that the second(ary) victim gets the axe.



**C. Torre – Em. Lasker**  
*Moscow 1925*

25 ♖f6! ♔xh5 26 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 (D)



27 ♖xf7+

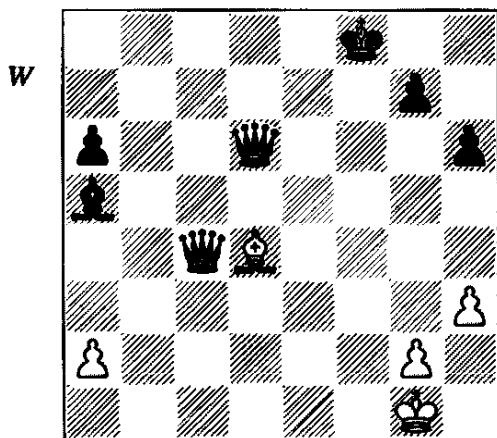
White can do a lot of shopping before regaining the queen. The nervous 27 ♖g5+ ♔h7 28 ♖xh5?? ♔g6 would lose for White.

27...♔g8 28 ♖g7+ ♔h8 29 ♖xb7+

This neat mechanism is known as a mill or windmill.

29...♔g8 30 ♖g7+ ♔h8 31 ♖g5+ ♔h7 32 ♖xh5 ♔g6 33 ♖h3 ♔xf6 34 ♖xh6+ and White won easily. Besides being a classic pattern, this is also a classic game.

## Pinning



**Bründtrup – Budrich**  
*Berlin 1954*

This is *ECM*'s illustration, and it is hard to improve upon. For some reason, this kind of tactic is often hard to spot, perhaps because the brain sometimes 'turns off' pinned pieces.

1 ♖c5

Pin.

1...♗b6

Counterpin.

2 ♕f4+! 1-0

Even though the c5-bishop is pinned, it is still pinning the queen on d6 and so White's queen can move to f4.

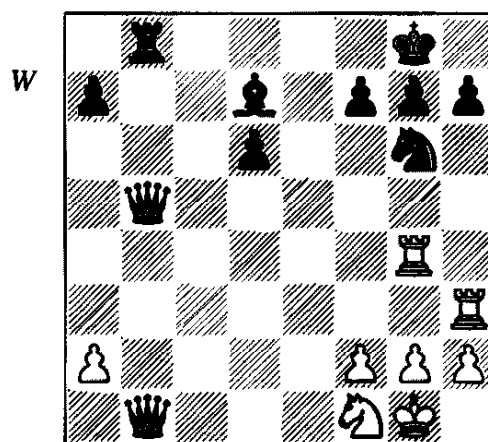
It seems to me that the *ECM* classification implies that a pin involves the king. This is slightly limiting, since one often speaks of one piece being pinned to another (usually more valu-

able, or unprotected) piece. Skewers can employ very much the same kind of action.

## Skewer

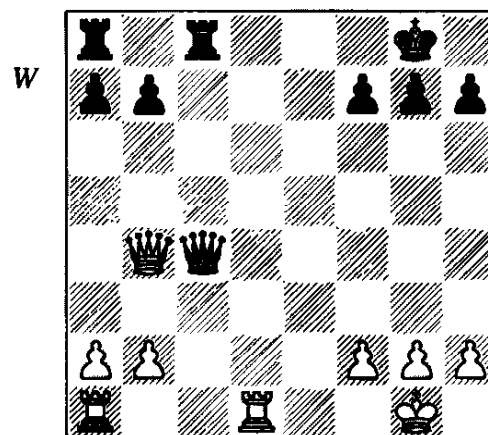
Like the pin, this motif basically utilizes unpleasant force concentrated in one direction.

## Basic skewers



Here we see the white rooks skewered by a bishop. After 1 ♖b3 Black's major pieces are skewered.

## Deflection



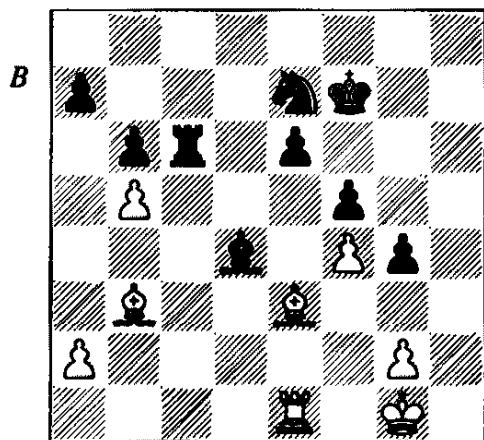
1 ♖d8+!

A very common employment of the deflection theme. This would win even if the black king could move, when White could trade queens and win the rook on a8.

1...♖xd8 2 ♛xc4

### Decoying

This motif is very closely related to Deflection. The difference is that a deflection simply removes a piece from the action. In decoying, the destination square of the piece being moved is significant:



**H. Öberg – Unander**  
*Finland 1983*

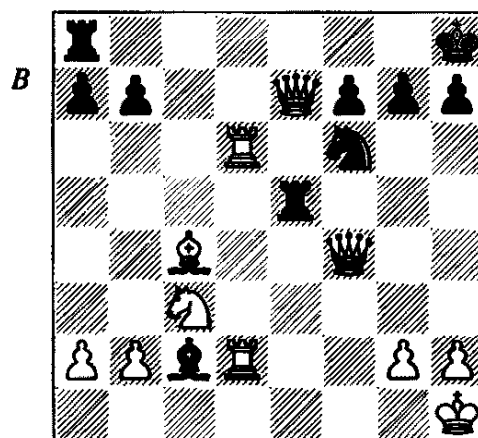
1...♖c1! 2 ♖xc1

Or 2 ♙xd4 ♖xe1+ and Black wins the exchange.

2...♙xe3+ 0-1

Note again how difficult it is to avoid some other tactical elements. Though the luring of the white rook to a fatal square is the dominant theme here, Black uses a pin, and the decoy sets up a decisive double attack from the bishop.

### Interference

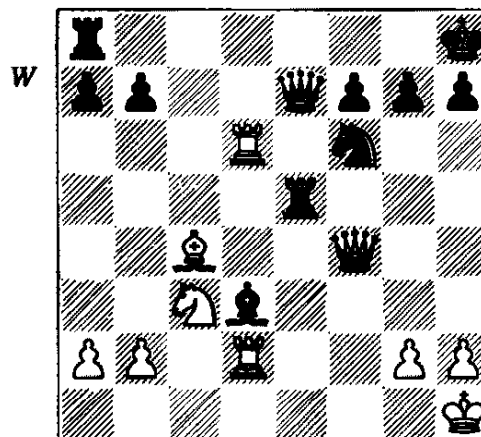


**R. Fuchs – V. Korchnoi**  
*Erevan 1965*

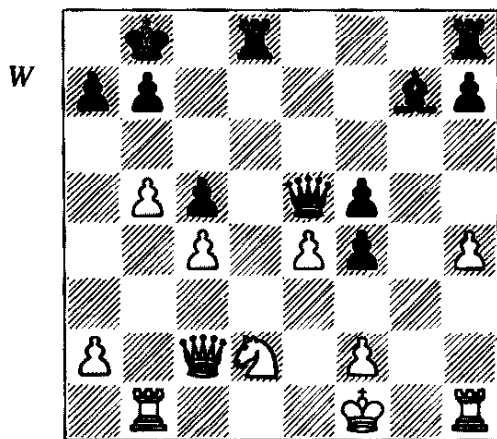
Here the weakness of White's back rank raises real suspicions about the soundness of his position.

1...♙d3!! (D)

A brilliant and memorable move. Black cuts off the defence of f1 and d6 by interfering with the lines of communication to both squares. Note again how often tactical themes are fancy ways of setting up a multiple threat. After...



2 ♙xd3 ♛xd6  
...Black won.

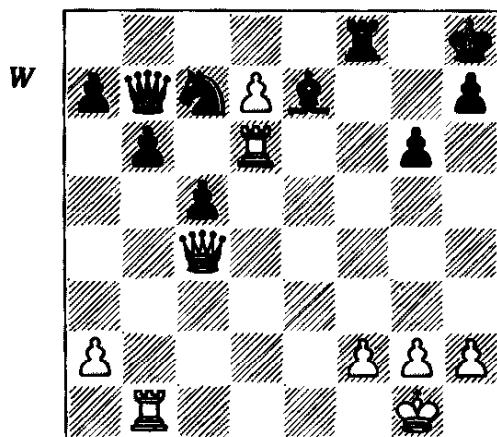
**Destruction (of defence/defender)**

**D. Marović – L. Piasetski**  
*Toronto 1990*

**1...♖xd2!**

This leads to a painful fork:

**2 ♜xd2 ♜xe4 0-1**

**Clearance**

**G. Kasparov – J. Příbyl**  
*Skara European team Ch 1980*

An memorable example of a square being more important than even so large an asset as a passed pawn on the 7th rank.

**1 d8♚!! ♖xd8**

If 1...♖xd8 then 2 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8 3 ♜f7 ♜d5 (the only defence against ♜f8+) 4 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 5 ♜d1 skewers a piece and reaches a winning ending for White.

**2 ♜c3+ ♜g8 3 ♜d7 ♖f6 4 ♜c4+ ♜h8 5 ♜f4!**

Black can not defend the knight on c7.

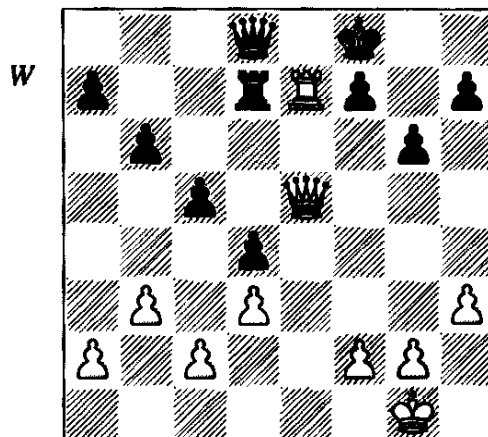
**5...♜a6?**

5...♖g7 6 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 7 ♜xc7 ♖d4 8 ♜f1 a5 allows Black to fight on longer. Being battered in imaginative fashion often induces error, even if the assailant isn't a future world champion.

**6 ♜h6! 1-0**

**Blocking**

This could also be called self-blocking, and is most often seen as a technique in mating attacks. Whereas in Appendix 1 we examined mating *pictures*, here we are often examining *tools*, many of which are most typically associated with mating attacks.



**A. Kwilecki – Roslinski**  
*Poland 1954*

1 ♖f6!

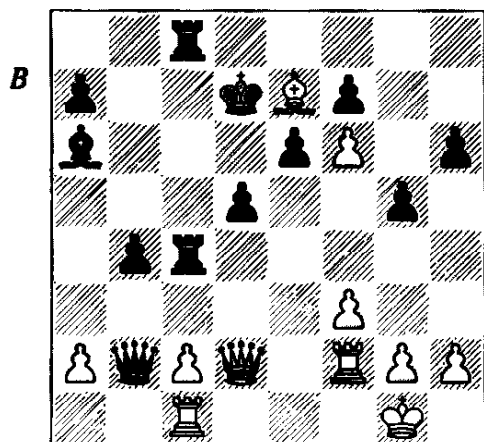
Sacrifice to force self-block. Capturing on e7 allows mate on h8, and there is no sensible way to defend the threat to f7. This example shows why I say self-blocking. Black could escape mate on h8 by capturing the rook with his king, but the preliminary threat of mate on f7 forced Black to occupy the e7-square with a black rook, so... 1-0

### Brinkmate

Brinkmate is a category that I have added, after some annoyance with a few examples which I felt were clearly not classified properly. See the section on Brinkmate / 'Hisshi' in Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice.

### X-Ray

This is a neat motif to master, because it is often hard to spot. There is some kind of built-in hallucinatory potential with the X-ray, because pieces influence the action 'through' other pieces.



Z. Nilsson – E. Geller  
Stockholm 1954

1... ♜xc2!

At first sight this move is impossible due to White's massive concentration of force on c2, but the point is to create x-ray pressure on the c1-square.

2 ♜xc2

2 ♜xc2 ♜b1+.

2... ♜xc1+! 0-1

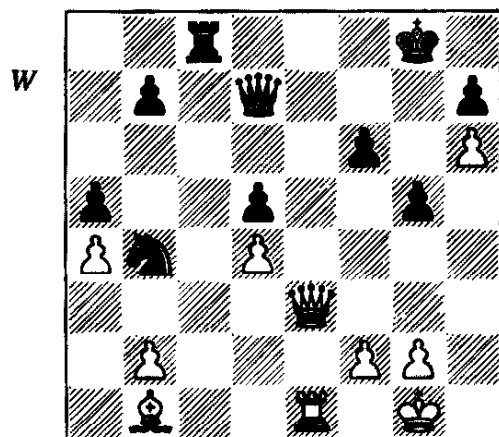
### 'Overloading'

I had some hesitations about this as a tactical theme. The overloaded piece is a well-known phenomenon, and the name is self-explanatory. Sometimes we mistakenly give some poor chunk of wood one too many important jobs to do. When such a piece is harassed, something snaps, usually something important.

However, it seemed to me that in many respects overloaded pieces simply *exist*, and are *exploited* by other means, usually deflection. The example presented for Deflection (above) illustrates this; Black's rook needed to protect the queen and the first rank. So that rook was overloaded, which was demonstrated when it was deflected from its duties.

I still believe that in many respects an overloaded piece is something that is victimized by other tactical themes, and deflection and overload are part of the same situation. But the following diagram is an interesting example that appears to reverse the order of the usual relationship.

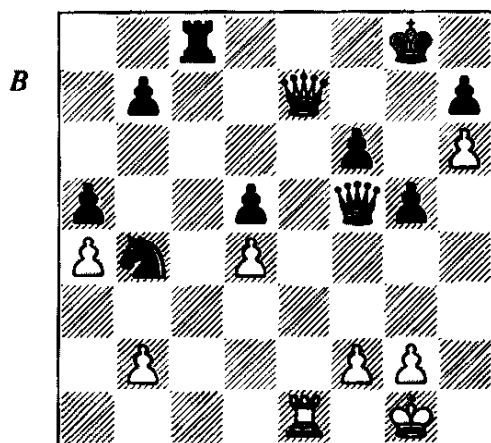
In this case a preliminary deflection sets up a fatal overload of the black queen.



**K. Lerner – H. Lehmann**  
*Kiev 1978*

1 ♖f5! ♜xf5 2 ♜e7 (D)

Now the black queen is overloaded, and cannot guard e6 and g7.

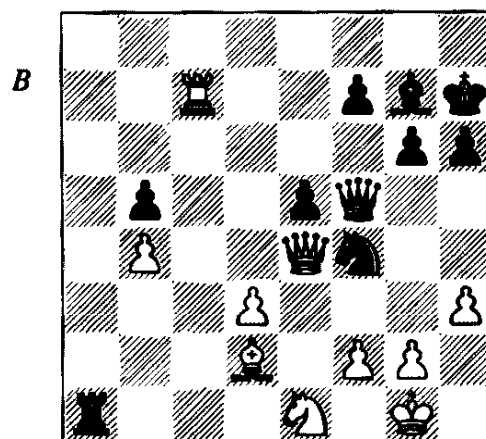


2... ♜g6 3 ♜e6+ 1-0

### **Zwischenzug**

One of those neat German words that have become part of the chess vocabulary due to a lack of adhesion in the English language. The in-between move, or interpolation, deserves careful study. This concept falls into the category of counter-intuitive tactics, so pay close attention to this possibility.

Apparently forced sequences, like captures and recaptures, can sometimes be interrupted with dramatic consequences. The following fragment should pound this point home:



**G. Barcza – D. Bronstein**  
*Moscow 1959*

1... ♜xd3! 2 ♜xf5

White may have had hopes of fighting on in a wretched ending, but Bronstein gives a *zwischenzug* exhibition.

2... ♜xe1!

Threatening ... ♜f3#.

3 ♜f1 ♜c2+ 4 ♜c1 ♜xc1+ 5 ♜e2 ♜d4+ 6 ♜d2

6 ♜d3 ♜d1+.

6... ♜b3+

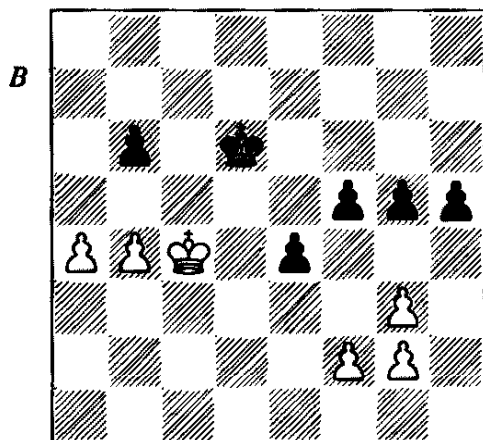
And with the series of intermediate chops and checks complete, Bronstein is finally ready to recapture White's queen.

0-1

### **Pawn promotion**

*ECM* has two categories here, the pawn breakthrough, and the passed pawn. The essential difference escapes me,

and I had some doubts about how it could be seen as a tactical motif. It is certainly a reasonable category for combinations. Since the promotion of a pawn is nearly as drastic a finish as mate, typical methods of achieving it must be worth studying.



N. Weinstein – M. Rohde  
Lone Pine 1977

1...f4!

1...h4?? occurred in the game: 2 gxf4 gxf4 3 ♔d4 ♕e6 and now White's outside passed pawn proved the decisive factor: 4 a5 bxa5 5 bxa5 ♔d6 6 a6 ♕c6 7 ♕e5 ♕b6 8 ♕xf5 ♕xa6 9 ♕xe4 1-0.

2 gxf4 gxf4 3 ♔d4

Otherwise ...h4 and ...f3.

3...e3!

3...f3 4 g3.

4 fxe3 f3 5 gxf3 h4

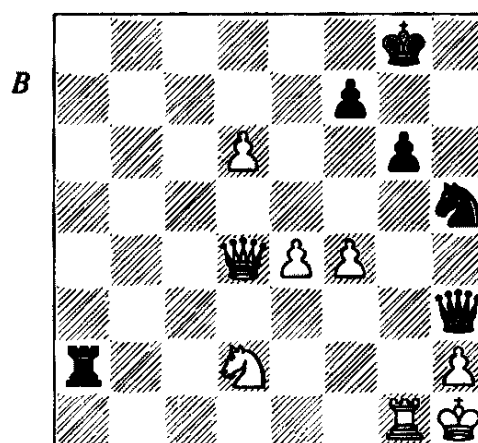
The h-pawn promotes. White's king is in the square of the passed pawn, but there are too many obstacles between him and the corner.

**The moral:** You can pay a very high price to push that pawn over the

goal line. This method of pawn breakthrough is a very common motif.

### Pursuit (Perpetual)

As far as I can see, this is the *ECM* heading for perpetual attack/check, so I would classify this under *drawing combinations*, and add another sub-topic, *Stalemate*.



L. Portisch – G. Kasparov  
Moscow 1981

1...♖xd2! 2 ♕xd2 ♕f3+ 3 ♕g2 ♔g3+!

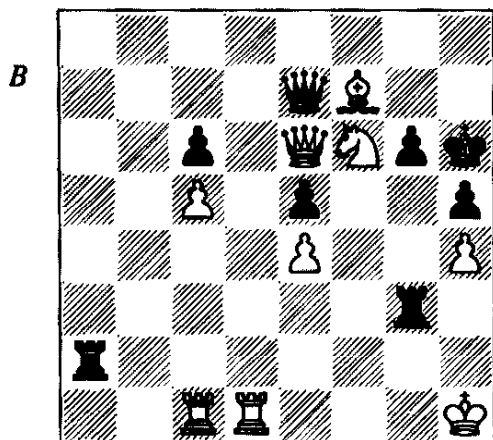
A final sacrifice to set up a classic perpetual engine. This specific pattern is worth remembering.

4 hxg3 ♕h5+ 5 ♕h2 ♕f3+ 6 ♖g2 ♕d1+ 7 ♕g1 ♕h5+ 8 ♖h2 ♕f3+ 1/2-1/2

### Stalemate

Stalemate is a rare visitor in the mid-game, but it does happen. Stalemate tends to be the absolute last try in a desperate position, and is often hard to spot when it appears earlier in the game.

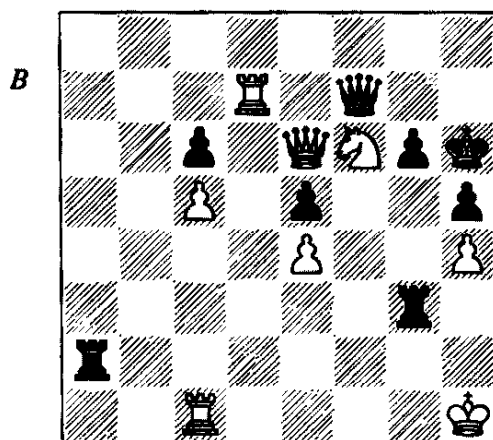
Since we are discussing drawing combinations, I will give an example with a prelude, so that we can get two themes for the price of one.



A. Beliavsky – L. Christiansen  
Reggio Emilia 1987

36...Qxf7! 37 Rxd7! (D)

White doesn't fall for the first trap. After 37 Qxf7 Rh3+ 38 Qg1 Rg3+ 39 Qf1 Rf3+ 40 Qe1 Re3+ Black escapes with perpetual check.



37...Qxf6! 38 Qxf6??

White believes Black is just having a last fling. The attentive 38 Rh7+! Qxh7 39 Qxf6 was winning still.

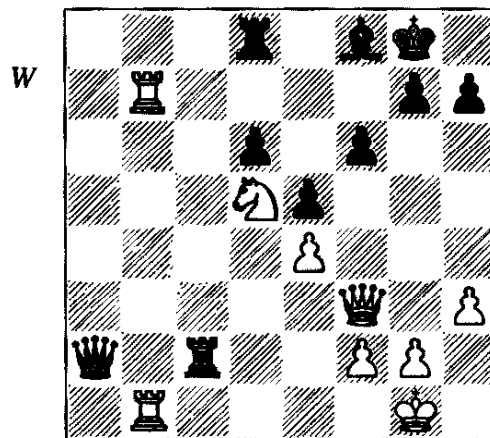
38...Rh2+!! 1/2-1/2

A draw was agreed since 39 Qxh2 Rg2+ 40 Qh1 Rg1+ gives White a choice between allowing perpetual or stalemate.

Other considerations are combinations to reach fortresses, eliminate last pawns, etc. This verges on endgame theory...

### 'Demolition of Pawn structure' (exposing enemy king/line-opening)

When this motif is a tactical operation, it tends to be a mating theme. I would call this type of sacrifice 'exposure', to distinguish it from the positional sacrifice to disrupt the opposing pawn structure.



Stama – Chelov  
USSR 1975

1 Qxf6+! gxf6 2 Qg4+ Qh8 3 Rh7+! 1-0

Black resigned since with his king stripped bare, only further humiliation can follow: 3...Qxh7 4 Rhb7+ and, amusingly, Black can interpose on any of the intervening squares on the



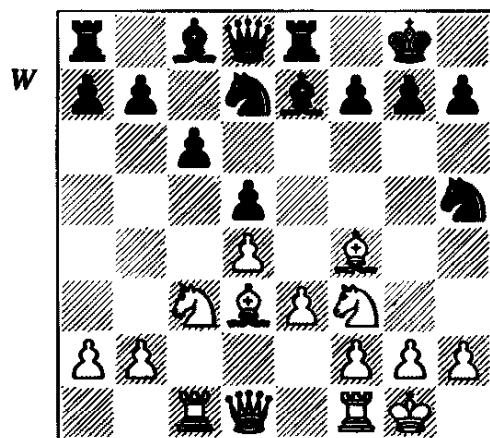
second rank, but none of them are protected.

4...♔h6 5 ♕h4+ ♔g6 6 ♕h7+ ♔g5  
7 ♕f5+

Mate follows next move. An effective illustration of the theme.

### Trapped pieces

This topic is not covered in *ECM*. While it is not a tactical pattern *per se*, one could consider it a category or type of combination.

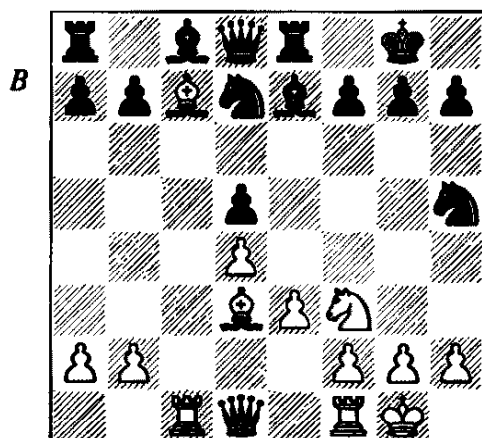


11 ♖xd5!

White wins a safe pawn since after...

11...cxd5 12 ♕c7 (D)

...the queen is trapped.

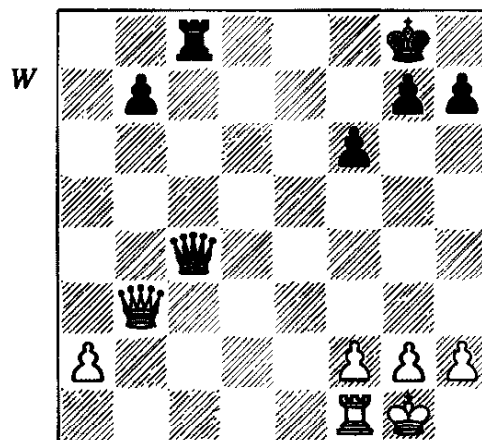


### A progressive digression

At the end of the first appendix, I offered some general advice about how to expand one's repertoire of mating patterns. Having catalogued the most prominent tactical themes here, I should really move on. I have already said that once the basics are discussed, the examination of how these themes may interact should come under another heading, where one solves positions by employing one's acquired arsenal. As a kind of bridge to Chapter 4, Pattern Training, I will nevertheless demonstrate a few examples where operation depend on more than one pattern.

### Some basic blends

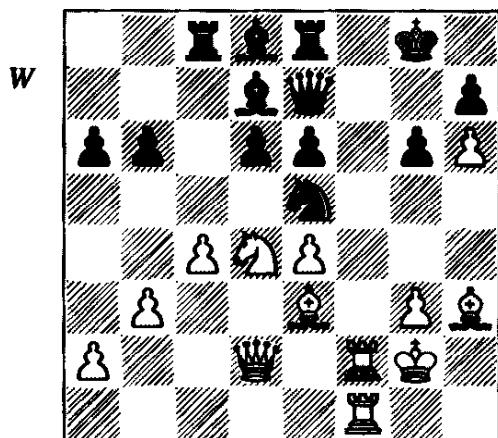
Even very simple combinations can blend themes.



Although this is an extremely simple position, the skewer here utilizes the two sub-themes pin and *zwischenzug*.

1 ♖c1! ♕xb3 2 ♖xc8+ ♔f7 3 axb3 and White wins.

Very complex combinations often have at heart a very simple basic theme. Have a close look at the finish in the next position.



**A. Sherzer – Lunna**  
*Somerset 1991*

This combination is a good example of how a simple aim – a primitive double attack, in this case a knight fork of king and queen – can be achieved by an elaborate but forced sequence. There are several reasons why White would be tempted to find a combinational solution here. Both Black's king and queen are seriously restricted. Black has also lost communication between his rooks on the first rank, and so the f8-square beckons for use in a knock-out. But arranging the proper geometry is not a trivial matter.

1 ♖g5!! ♜xg5 2 ♖xe6+! ♖xe6 3 ♜f8+!

It is possible that White could be aided in his search for this combination by contemplating the line 3 ♘xe6 which appears to win by hitting f8 and g5. However, 3...♜xd2 pins the f2-rook and turns the tables, but this

variation does draw even more attention to the critical squares involved.

3...♜xf8 4 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 5 ♘xe6+

From the original position it would only take a quick body-count to make sure that White had not sacrificed too much to win the queen. In fact, Black resigned here.

This example showed another important aspect of combinational play, mentioned in Chapter 4, Pattern Training: the active construction of a desired position as the stimulus for finding a combinational possibility. The topic of multiple themes and possible confusion from multiple patterns is also discussed there.

## Positional Combinations

These seems an unlikely heading, but sorting through the themes above and trying to find them in relatively pure form provoked some thought. Many of the categories are commonly attached to swashbuckling blows and attacks on the king. But if you read some of the titles, they could just as easily apply to more sedate versions. Clearance sacrifices in particular are often of a purely strategic nature.

Destruction of pawn structure in a tactical chapter is better tagged as 'exposure' when the enemy king is the one behind the pawns. However, ragged pawn structure elsewhere can be just as fatal. A clever sequence that inflicts damage that results in a slow win should also be noted. For versions of quieter sacrifices, see Chapter 5, The Value of the Pieces.

# Annotated Bibliography

The examples in this book have been culled from a wide variety of sources. The list below details works that consciously influenced the thinking in this book (primary sources) as well as those that were consulted in some way, or that were simply read along the way and had a lesser impact (as far as I can tell) on the work in hand. I have attached details and impressions that may be of interest to the reader.

## Primary Sources

*Think Like a Grandmaster*, Alexander Kotov (Batsford, 1972 & 1995)

A classic that has had immeasurable influence on chess teaching, and which touches upon the widest range of concerns, practical and psychological. A compendium of Soviet thinking, *Think Like a Grandmaster* draws upon the writings of most of the influential writers and teachers of the then Soviet School. The version referred to here is the original English edition, in descriptive notation, translated by Bernard Cafferty. (The algebraic edition was published in 1995.)

*Secrets of Chess Tactics*, Mark Dvoretsky (Batsford, 1992)

Dvoretsky is the modern giant of chess teachers. As this list hints, everything he has written is worth reading. This particular work is my favourite since it covers the widest

range of topics without losing accessibility to a wide readership. Dvoretsky has no peer when it comes to getting results and has an astonishing list of successful students.

*Positional Chess Handbook*, Israel Gelfer (Batsford, 1991)

Not a very well known work, but highly recommended. Gelfer collects memorable examples of useful strategic themes. The book can serve as a kind of instant experience base as well as an example of the kind of notebook one can create to note and catalogue useful ideas. I found that many of the examples I collected over time for teaching are also included here. This is a handy and easily digested manual that can stimulate the serious student to further efforts.

*The Art of Attack*, V. Vuković (Cadogan, reprint 1993)

Perhaps the best attacking manual ever written, though unfortunately I still have not seen an English version in algebraic notation. Well organized and well thought out, it has influenced people like Dr John Nunn...

*The Art of Checkmate*, Renaud & Kahn (Dover)

I am a bit sketchy about the details of this book, as I have not seen my copy in many years and am not even sure it is still in print. It had enough of

an influence on my chess-playing youth that I can still remember a great deal of it. Extremely well organized, it does an exemplary job of transmitting the material from page to brain. A simpler version of Vuković's book but highly instructive.

*Chess Psychology*, Nikolai Krogius (Alfred Kalnajs & Son, 1972)

My version of this classic is a rather odd old production which does not even credit a translator. There is a great deal of source material in common with *Think Like a Grandmaster*. The book deals with the psychology of blunders, time pressure and patterns of thinking. A fascinating read.

*Encyclopedia of Chess Middle-games / Combinations* (Šahovski Informator 1980)

This is reviewed in Appendix 2.

*Danger in Chess*, Amatzia Avni, (Cadogan 1994)

Although the topic is rather secondary in the context of this book, I have to rank any book which I have often reread as a primary source. *DiC* straddles the fields of chess and psychology and so provides what I find to be fascinating and rare material. Very well researched and referenced, the author hopes that his book stimulates further research and debate. I in turn hope that any thoughts Avni sparked in my mind fulfil this aim.

## Secondary Sources

*Secrets of Chess Training*, Mark Dvoretsky

*Opening Preparation*, Dvoretsky and Artur Yusupov

*Training for the Tournament Player*, Dvoretsky and Yusupov (all Batsford, 1991, 1994 and 1993 respectively)

The last two titles (and particularly the last) include lectures by players other than the authors, and so are diluted works for Dvoretsky fans. However, as some of these guest lecturers are people like Gregory Kaidanov and Mikhail Shereshevsky, this is a minor quibble.

*Attack with Mikhail Tal*, Mikhail Tal and Iakov Damsky (Cadogan 1994)

A future classic? One could hardly ask for more than lessons in attack from the Wizard of Riga. Tal's greatest gifts as a writer, I think, were honesty and accessibility. He does not hesitate to reveal the tiniest details in an often surprising thought-process, and does so in vivid and engaging style. The material is simply but effectively organized, and examples flow from the conversation between the authors. The reader is swept away by the book's readability, and probably will not notice how much has been learned until later.

*The Art of Defence in Chess*, Lev Polugaevsky and Iakov Damsky (Pergamon 1988)

This should perhaps be a primary source as I suddenly reread it to see

how it fit in with some of my old theories. I have never thought of 'Polu' as a defensive authority but this is a useful manual on an undervalued subject. Not quite as systematic as it could have been, it should nevertheless greatly expand a player's armoury.

*Dynamic Chess Strategy*, Mihai Suba (Cadogan 1991)

A real rarity – a chess book that both entertains *and* sets forth original thoughts. A well of inspiration for those not afraid to philosophize about the game. Highly recommended, and one of my favourite books.

*Learn Chess*, C.H.O'D. Alexander (Pergamon/Cadogan 1963/1994)

A very thorough course for beginners and well executed. One of many books I consulted in hopes of some spark of inspiration on the topic of intuition/experience. This was fruitless, but I have yet to find anything beyond the basic equation that intuition is based on experience and that experience must be acquired not taught. This book starts with first steps and moves on until one is jogging.

*Shogi for Beginners*, John Fairbairn (Ishi Press/The Shogi Association, 1984)

The essential starter for the English-speaking shogi player. I have borrowed one of Fairbairn's terms, and mused a bit on the Japanese tradition of teaching by aphorism, and its potential use in chess teaching. Also provided an intellectual spark towards a

discussion of material values, though one should perhaps credit shogi itself with that. Shogi is a wonderful game, vastly complex and tactical, and virtually free from draws.

*Larsen's Selected Games 1948-69*, Bent Larsen (McKay/Bell, 1970)

Any annotated game collection of a top player is to be recommended. When they annotate the games themselves, it is an even bigger occasion. When the player is also entertaining and outspoken, honest and conscientious, you really have something special. The book provides insight into how a top player really thinks, and is rare in its examination of chess psychology, an aspect of the game in which Larsen excelled. I happened to re-read this as I was finishing this book and realized that it must have profoundly influenced my thinking a long time ago. So, I mention it as a certain unconscious influence and as a neglected classic.

*Common Sense in Chess*, Emanuel Lasker (McKay/Dover, 1917)

This classic certainly shows signs of age, but there remains a wealth of sound advice here. A useful book for less experienced players.

*My System*, Aron Nimzowitsch (McKay, 1947)

Nimzowitsch's masterpiece is another rarity, a controversial chess book. Or perhaps that was more a sign of its time – it is hard to imagine how one could generate such a controversy

now. Someone has said that there is really no system here at all, it is more a collection of observations. The book is a bit to difficult to read, despite the author's energetic style. Although much of what Nimzowitsch held dear is debatable, there is no shortage of instruction in the book, and even some of his less enduring ideas remain thought provoking. I am constantly surprised by how often I can pick this book up, and see some position discussed which has direct bearing on the latest games. Required reading.

### **Further Reading**

*Isolated Pawn*, Adrian Mikhalechshin, Yaroslav Srokowski and Vitaly Braslavsky (Intelinvest, 1995)

This is a good example of the potential benefits of database generated teaching. A vast array of typical positional themes and sub-themes are gathered and classified for the student.

On the plus side, the examples are annotated well enough so that the book escapes the popular pitfall of being just a catalogue of raw information. The minus side is that the tremendous potential for teaching with the powerful search and sorting tools now commonly available are not fully exploited. There could be more organized verbal instruction, and more of an attempt to form guidelines. On the whole though, the book provides a meaty course from one of the game's staple ingredients.

*Gute Läufer – Schlechte Läufer*, Wolfgang Uhlmann, Lothar Vogt (Sportverlag Berlin, 1988)

My German is not good enough to review this book properly, but it falls into the category of source books that fill a noticeable gap in the education market. The authors discuss the problem of 'good bishop – bad bishop' and provide some excellent examples.

# Solutions to exercises

## From Chapter 4, Pattern Training

**V. Tseshkovsky – L. Polugaevsky**

Black's pressure against b2 and c2 and active rooks indicate the pressure usually generated in a successful Sicilian. It is perhaps this subjective feeling that convinced the eminent calculator Lev Polugaevsky to launch the following combination:

1...♖e2+ 2 ♜f2 ♜xf2+ 3 ♜xf2 ♜xb2  
4 ♜xb2 ♜xc2+ 5 ♜e3 ♜xb2

Despite Black's material advantage, his position is critical due to White's attacking chances. Here we see the impact of other aspects of the previous patterns – the advantage of space, and the relative activity of the kings. White's king plays an instrumental role here too, though a less prominent one. On the other hand, Black's omission to set a proper priority on king activity also has a noteworthy connection to our theme.

If you assessed this position as too hot for Black to handle, you exercised sound judgement. Whether Polugaevsky could not resist the temptation, or judged his position to be too passive otherwise, is impossible to say. White must strike the proper balance between keeping some of his own pawns on the board, and not releasing Black's king from captivity. The game finished like this:

6 ♜c1 ♜b3+ 7 ♜e2 ♜b2+ 8 ♜e1 f6  
9 g6 ♜a2

9...hxc6 10 fxg6 ♜a2 (10...♜xh2 11 ♜c8 ♜h1+ 12 ♜e2 ♜h2+ 13 ♜f3 ♜h3+ 14 ♜g2 and the king escapes the checks – this is the main winning device for White) 11 ♜c8 ♜a1+ 12 ♜e2 ♜a2+ 13 ♜e3 ♜a3+ 14 ♜e4 ♜xa4+ 15 ♜f5 ♜a5 16 ♜e6 ♜xd5 17 ♜xd5 and White wins.

10 ♜c8 ♜a1+ 11 ♜d2 ♜a2+ 12 ♜d3 ♜a3+ 13 ♜c2 ♜a2+ 14 ♜c3!

More accurate than the continuation 14 ♜b3?! ♜e2 15 gxh7+ ♜xh7 16 ♜xf8.

14...hxc6

14...♜e2 15 ♜f4! ♜e1 16 ♜xf8+!

15 ♜e7+! ♜h7

15...♜f7 16 ♜xc6 ♜e7 17 ♜h8#!

16 fxg6+ ♜h6 17 ♜xf8

Now White must just take care to preserve his most important pawns.

17...♜e2 18 ♜h8+ ♜g5 19 h4+ ♜g4 20 ♜d5 ♜h2 21 ♜h7!

21 ♜xf6+ ♜f5.

21...♜h3+ 22 ♜d4 ♜f5 23 ♜h5+ ♜g4 24 ♜h7 ♜f5 25 ♜e7+ ♜e6 26 ♜xg7 ♜xh4+ 27 ♜e3 1-0

My feeling is that a move like 1...♜e4 was to be preferred, attempting to inconvenience White's kingside pawns, but Black's position is difficult in either case.

## From Chapter 6, Wisdom and Advice

The solution to the Hlinka and Klimanić study (page 176) runs:

1 c7!

There are a quite a few tempting sidelines, but Black can defend against them: 1 b7 ♖xa4+ 2 ♔b2 dxc6 3 ♖a8 ♖b4+; 1 ♘d5+ ♔d6 and now:

a) 2 cxd7 ♔xd7 3 ♖xc2 ♖xa4+ 4 ♔b2 ♔d6 (4...♙b8).

b) 2 c7 ♙xb6 3 ♘xb6 ♖c5. Wending your way through these false paths and assessing them objectively is obstacle one. Now a tougher task: trying to puzzle out how Black defends himself here.

1...♖xa4+ 2 ♔b2 ♖b4+! 3 ♔xc2

3 ♔c1 ♖c4 4 bxa7 ♙e4+ 5 ♔d2 ♔d6 6 ♖e8 ♖xc7 and Black forces a draw.

3...♖c4+ 4 ♔d3 ♖c3+! 5 ♔xd4

5 ♔d2 ♙xb6 6 ♘d5+ ♔d6 and now White cannot maintain a decisive material advantage.

5...♖xc7! 6 ♘d5+ ♔d6 7 ♘xc7! ♙xb6+ 8 ♔c4 ♙xc7 9 ♔b5!

White wins thanks to zugzwang.

Perhaps the most difficult thing of all about this study is rejecting the solution too soon. It takes a while to find Black's defensive idea, and when it is spotted, one can be easily convinced that White has been foiled. Another aspect of the solution worth noting, is that zugzwang is typically a difficult idea to notice, due to its absolute stillness. The idea that the assessment of a position can be radically altered by doing nothing defies simple analysis.

The Troitsky study (page 176) is solved by:

1 b7!

I hope you did not fall for 1 bxa7? ♖a4 2 ♙c5 ♔c4 3 d6?? ♔xc5 4 d7

♖g4+ when ...♖g8 wins for Black. 1 d6? axb6 2 d7 ♖d4 leads to a drawn ending, as will be explained below.

1...♖g4+ 2 ♔f2 ♖g8 3 d6 ♔c4 4 d7 ♔b5!! 5 d8♖ ♖xd8 6 ♙xd8 ♔a6 7 b8♙!!

The desperate search for a defensive idea (and if you were Black in such a situation, desperation is the only alternative to resignation) should have led Black to hunt out a typical last-ditch resource like stalemate. Noticing that promotions to a major piece lead to immediate stalemate make this a natural candidate for a last attempt to save the game. But surely an underpromotion wins simply?

After 7 b8♘+? ♔b7 8 ♘d7 ♔c8 9 ♘f6 ♔xd8 10 ♘h7 ♔e7! 11 ♔f3 ♔f7 12 ♘g5+ ♔g6 13 h7 ♔g7 escapes with a positional draw. If you didn't know that, make a note of it!

If White preserves the bishop instead of the knight, Black's king heads for the h8 corner with another positional draw – the formation b♙h7 vs w♙h6 is a *fortress* against the bishop. White cannot drive the king away, only stalemate it. The incredible move in the solution, despite its apparent uselessness, destroys this fortress, as we shall see.

7...♔b7 8 ♙e5 ♔c8 9 ♙e7 ♔d7 10 ♙7d6 ♔e6 11 ♔f3 a5 12 ♔f4 a4 13 ♙a3 ♔f7 14 ♔f5 ♔g8 15 ♔f6

Now the vital difference is evident – with *two* dark-squared bishops, when the black king is compelled to enter the corner...

15...♔h8 16 ♔f7 is just mate, not stale.



Solving these studies is not possible without a vigorous search for the *defender's* best moves as well. Since overlooking the opponent's possibilities, or indulging in calculations based on pure optimism are among the

commonest sins, the value of such exercises should be obvious.

In passing, the Troitsky study also includes two useful positional draws that should be in one's 'knowledge base'.

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**Grandmaster Jonathan Tiedall** is a professional player and an experienced chess journalist who has reported on many world championship matches. Originally hailing from the United States, he now lives in Norway, where he teaches pupils of a wide range of playing standards. He is well regarded on the international circuit as an opening theoretician and analyst, and has been Jon Speelman's second in World Championship Candidates matches.

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